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AN

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

VICTOR ALFIERI;

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

Translated from the Italian.

Plerique suam ipsi vitam narrare, fiduciam potius morum, quam arrogantiam, arbitrati sunt.

TACITUS—*Life of Agricola.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HENRY COLBURN, CONDUIT-STREET,

NEW BOND-STREET.

1810.

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B. CLARKE, Printer, Well-Street, London.

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MEMOIRS

OF

VICTOR ALFIERI.

Fourth Epoch.

MANHOOD,

COMPREHENDING MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS OF MY LITERARY LABOURS.

CHAPTER I.

My two first Tragedies, Philippe and Polinice, written in French Prose—Mass of detestable Poetry.

THUS then at twenty-seven years of age did I enlist myself in the service of the muses, and appear before the public as a dramatic author. I shall now proceed to point out the resources I possessed to enable

me to support so daring and presumptuous a flight.

A resolute, obstinate, and ungovernable character, susceptible of the warmest affections, among which, by an odd kind of combination, predominated the most ardent love, and a hatred approaching to madness against every species of tyranny; an imperfect and vague recollection of several French tragedies which I had seen represented several years before, but which I had then neither read nor studied; a total ignorance of dramatic rules; and an incapability of expressing myself with elegance and precision in my own language. To these were superadded an insufferable presumption, or more properly speaking, petulance, and a degree of violence which seldom allowed me to investigate and perceive truth.

With similar elements it would have been easier to have formed a tyrannical prince than a man of letters. At length a powerful voice arose from the bottom of my heart which cried more energetically than that of my few friends. "It is necessary to retrace your steps in order to study grammar, and

the art of composition." In conformity to this divine and powerful admonition, I at length submitted to the hard necessity of recommencing the studies of my infancy at an age when I thought and felt like a man. But the flame of glory shone in my eyes, and resolving to wipe away the shame of my deplorable ignorance, I assumed sufficient courage to combat and overcome every obstacle which opposed my progress.

The representation of Cleopatra had not only convinced me that the subject was intrinsically bad, and would never be selected by any one except an ignorant author, but made me perceive the immense space I had to traverse before I could regain the barrier, re-enter the lists, and dart forward with more or less chance of success towards the goal. As soon however as the veil which obscured my sight was withdrawn, I solemnly vowed, in my own mind, neither to spare trouble nor fatigue, in order to render myself an equal proficient in my native tongue as the most learned philologist in Italy. I assumed this resolution, because I conceived if I once acquired a felicity of expression, I

should never experience any difficulties from a poverty of imagination or a paucity of ideas. Having thus bound myself by an oath, I resolutely plunged, with the courage of a Curtius, into the abyss of grammar. In proportion as I became convinced that I had executed badly what I had hitherto done, the more firmly did I believe it was in my power to perform it better. I had in my opinion a striking proof of this in my two tragedies, Philippe and Polinice, which I had written in French prose three months before the representation of Cleopatra. These I had read to some of my friends, who appeared to be much struck with them. I was led to form this opinion not so much from the quantum of praise which they bestowed on them, as from the profound attention with which they listened from the beginning to the end of the performance. Their silent agitation, and the expression of their features, spoke even more highly in my favour than their words. Unfortunately, however, whatever might be the merit of these two tragedies, they were written in French prose, and much labour was requisite to

transform them into Italian poetry. I had sketched them in this meagre and unpleasing language, not that I knew it, nor even pretended to know it, but because during my five years' travels it was the only language I heard spoken, and because I explained myself in it better than in any other. By my ignorance of language I bore a striking resemblance to one of those noted couriers of Italy, who, when sick in bed, dreams that he runs, and wants only his limbs to surpass his rivals.

The difficulty of explaining or translating my sentiments either into Italian verse or prose was such, that when I read in this language, an act or scene which appeared to delight my auditors in French, they no longer knew it to be the same, and inquired the reason of the change. Such was the influence of other dresses and decorations, that the same figure was insupportable, and incapable of being recognized. I raged, I wept, but it was necessary to assume patience, and begin my task anew. I was obliged to ransack classical productions, however insipid and anti-tragical, in order to become master of

the native Tuscan. In short, it behoved me wholly to forget what I had hitherto learned in order to acquire it.

The fate of these two tragedies made me lend a more patient ear to the judicious counsels which I received from every quarter, and induced me to be present, however painful it might be to my feelings, at the representation of Cleopatra. Every verse the actors pronounced resounded in my ears, as the most severe criticism on a work that from this moment lost all interest in my eyes. Henceforward I considered it only as affording a stimulus to future exertions.

I did not allow myself to be influenced by the severe criticisms directed against my tragedies, when I published the first edition of my Cleopatra at Sienna in 1783. But neither did I any longer pride myself on the unmerited praises which the pit at Turin, pleased perhaps with my youthful temerity, seemed so well inclined to bestow on me. Though from the commencement of July, 1803, in order to avoid conversing in the French language, I religiously shunned

every society in which it was spoken, yet I did not succeed in *Italianising* myself. I could never accommodate my mind to progressive and regular study; always acting in opposition to prudent advice, I inclined to soar anew on my own pinions. On this account I forced myself to versify every subject that occurred to my mind. Various were the species of poetry I attempted. But though my pride was uniformly humbled, yet obstinacy and hope still stimulated me to persevere. Among other rhapsodies, for they deserve not the name of poetry, I wrote some couplets, which I sung at a meeting of free masons. They were full of allusions to the insignia, different orders, &c. of the society. Though I had already pilfered one verse from Petrarch in my first sonnet, yet such were my ignorance and inattention that I began this piece without recollecting the rules prescribed in such compositions, which I had perhaps never well understood. I continued in this error till I reached the twelfth stanza, when some doubts suggesting themselves, I opened Dante and dis-

covered my fault, which I avoided in the sequel of the piece, leaving, however, the others as they originally stood. In this state they were sung at the lodge, but these masons, being as little proficients in poetry as in the art of building, did not perceive their defects.

Finding during the month of August, 1775, that the dissipated life to which I was exposed in the city prevented me from devoting myself entirely to study, I retired to the mountainous district situated between Piedmont and Dauphiné. I spent nearly two months at Cezannes, a small village at the foot of Mount Genevre, by which, according to some, Hannibal pursued his way in scaling the Alps. Though naturally much given to reflection, I was yet sometimes imprudent through an impetuosity of temper. Hence it did not occur to me on assuming this determination, that I should again encounter in my retreat among these mountains that same detestable French language which I wished so much to avoid. The idea of thus secluding myself was sug-

gested by the same Abbé who had been my travelling companion in my last ridiculous journey to Florence.

This Abbé was a native of Cezannes, possessed much wit, a benevolent disposition, and was well versed in Latin and French literature. He had acted as a preceptor to two of my companions at college, where we contracted a lasting friendship for each other. At that period the Abbé sought to inspire me with a thirst for knowledge, but his efforts were fruitless.

Such, when I inhabited the first apartment of the academy, was the indifference I evinced to become a dramatic author. It must be confessed, that ever afterwards the monotonous and insipid cadence of French verse always disgusted me. I never could consider them in the light of poetry either in the days of my ignorance, or when I conceived myself better acquainted with the subject.

But to return to my summer retreat at Cezannes. Besides my literary Abbé, a musical Abbé accompanied me, who gave me lessons on the guitar. But though I had

a great predilection for this instrument, whose sounds excited in my mind the most rapturous transports, and inspired me with a taste for poetry, yet I never had the patience to cultivate it. Neither did I excel on the harpsichord, which I was taught in my youth, though I possessed an ardent imagination, and an exquisite ear for music.

Thus did I pass the summer in the society of these two Abbés. While one of them occasionally relieved my mind by the concord of sweet sounds from the pain occasioned by my application to study, I wished the other at the Devil with his French. Notwithstanding this I spent my time in a way at once profitable and delightful. I learned to retire within myself, and to labour with energy in rubbing off the rust which my mind had contracted during ten years of disgraceful torpor and inactivity. I began to translate into Italian prose Philippe and Polinice, which had originally been written in a pseudo-tongue. Notwithstanding all my efforts, however, these two tragedies always exhibited a mongrel appearance of

Italian and French, as is affirmed by our poet of burning paper:

Un color bruno
Che non é nero ancora e il bianca muove.

Wholly occupied with this painful labour of converting French conceptions into Italian verse, I felt myself excessively fatigued by re-moulding my Cleopatra for the third time. I had read some of the scenes of this piece in French to Count Tana, my dramatic, but ungrammatical censor, who considered some of them very beautiful and energetic, particularly that between Augustus and Anthony. When, however, they were transformed into bad Italian verse, he viewed them very differently, regarding them even beneath mediocrity. This he candidly told me, and I believed him, nay I even felt it myself; so true is it that in poetic composition style constitutes half its value, and sometimes as in lyric poetry even the whole. So that some verses which,

Col la lor vanità che par persona,

are above others,

Fosser gemme legate in vile anello.

I seize this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging the obligations I owe both to Father Paciaudi and Count Tana, particularly to the latter, in consideration of the truths which they had the courage to tell me, and for having as it were compelled me to adopt a proper mode of study. So great was the confidence which I reposed in these two men, that I placed my literary fate entirely in their hands. Such in fact was the deference I paid to their opinions, that I would have instantly committed to the flames every production which called forth their censure; and I certainly had written various pieces which merited no other correction. If ever I may be deemed worthy to rank as a poet, I ought to subjoin to that title: *by the grace of God, of Count Tana,* and of *Father Paciaudi.* They were my tutelary guardians in the painful and diurnal struggle I had to maintain during the first year of my literary career. They taught me to banish French idioms and phrases, to change their original dress, to clothe them in a different garb, and in short to combine at the same time

the studies of an adult with those of youth; a labour so incredibly difficult and unpleasant, that I may venture to affirm it would have repelled any mind imbued with less ardour than my own.

After translating my two tragedies into wretched prose, I next begun to read and study, in the order of their antiquity, all our most celebrated poets. Instead of writing marginal notes, I merely contented myself with making small perpendicular strokes opposite those passages with which I was most delighted. As I found Dante at first too abstruse, I quitted him for Tasso, which till then I had never opened. I read this author with such attention, and so anxious was I to unravel his meaning, that I often felt myself more exhausted before getting through ten stanzas than if I had composed them myself.

Gradually however I became habituated to this laborious mode of study. In this manner did I toil through the *Jerusalem of Tasso, the Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto, afterwards Dante, and at length Petrarch, in all of which I wrote marginal

notes during my progress. I spent more than one year in this labour. When I met with any difficulty in Dante, I gave myself little trouble to understand him, if it related to a mere point of history: when, however, it regarded an expression, a sentiment, or the turn of a sentence, I essayed with all my strength to comprehend him. On such occasions, when success attended my attempts, I felt myself not a little gratified. As soon as I had read these four great poets, I immediately prepared myself, by subsequent readings, to comprehend them thoroughly, and enter into their spirit—an undertaking to which I was probably stimulated by the idea of one day successfully imitating them. Petrarch seemed more difficult to comprehend than Dante, and at first afforded me less gratification, since we never receive much pleasure in reading poetical pieces which we do not readily understand. As I wished to write in blank verse, I hunted after the best models. I was advised to peruse the translation of Statius by Bentivoglio; but though I attentively studied this work, and wrote mar-

ginal notes as I proceeded, yet the structure of the verse seemed to me to be feeble, and ill adapted for tragic dialogue. The Ossian of Cezarotti was the next work recommended to me by my censors and friends. This work attracted my notice, and I conceived that with a slight modification it would serve as an excellent model for colloquial verse. I likewise wished to read some Italian tragedies, either written originally in this language, or translated from the French. From these I hoped to derive some improvement, at least with respect to style, but I soon became disgusted with their length, with the prolixity of the sentences, and the construction of the verse, not to mention the poverty displayed in the conceptions throughout. Among the least exceptionable, I read the four tragedies which Paradisi translated from the French, and to which he subjoined notes as well as to the Merope of Maffei. The style of this last production pleased me much, particularly in some places, though according to the standard I had erected in my own mind, it was far from having at-

tained perfection. I inquired of myself: "How happens it that our divine language which appears so bold, and even sometimes so energetical and sublime in Dante, should become languid and effeminate in dramatic dialogue? Why happens it, that the versification of Cezarotti, which is so nervous in his Ossian, should become so prosaic and diffuse in Semiramis and the Mahomet of Voltaire? Why, moreover, does it happen that the pompous Frugoni, in his translation of the Rhadamiste of Crebillon, falls so much beneath his author, and even himself? Certainly the fault cannot be justly imputed to our language, which is so copious and flexible. When I suggested these doubts to my arbiters and friends, they were unable to answer me. The worthy Paciaudi recommended to me, however, in my laborious studies, not to neglect prose, which he learnedly termed the *nurse of verse*. I remember that one day having brought me the Galateo del Casa, he advised me to study it with care, and particularly to attend to the turn of the style, which was the purest Tuscan.

Though I read it, like most others, during my youth, without comprehending or perceiving its beauties, yet I felt my pride piqued by this scholastic injunction. I opened it, however, though with the greatest repugnance; but no sooner had I read the very first sentence, which equally disgusted me by its pomposity and insignificance, than I flung the book in a rage out of the window, exclaiming like a fool: "What an insufferable hardship, if in order to write tragedies I must, at the age of twenty-seven, be condemned to read such stuff, and harrass my brain with such trifling absurdities." Father Paciaudi only smiled at my absurd warmth, and predicted notwithstanding that at some future period I should give it more than one perusal. Just so it fell out, several years afterwards, when my mind had become more habituated to philological criticism; not only did I read Galatea, and write notes on it, but also on all our other prose writers of the fourteenth century. The fact is that he who carefully reads these works, and attends to the style in which

they are written, separating the ore from the dross in his progress, will be enabled to impart to the style of his own productions, of whatever nature they may be, a richness, a conciseness, a simplicity, and a strength of colouring, not to be found in any of the works of the present times. Probably few will be found to undertake such a laborious task, who possess sufficient spirit and capacity to derive advantage from it; while those who possess not these qualities would attempt it in vain.

CHAPTER II.

I engage an Instructor, and begin to explain Horace—My first literary Journey to Tuscany.

HAVING devoted myself during six months to the study of Italian literature, I began, about the commencement of 1776, to experience an emotion of grief and shame, that I had entirely forgotten the little Latin, I had acquired in the early part of my life. So great indeed was my ignorance of this language, that when I met in the course of my reading even with the shortest and most common quotations, I was compelled to pass over them. Having besides prohibited myself the use of French Authors, and confined my studies to Italian alone, I was thus deprived of all aid in reading dramatic works. For these and other reasons I was

induced again to direct my attention to the study of the Latin tongue, in order to enable me to read the tragedies of Seneca, some detached portions of which had enchanted me with their sublimity. I moreover felt an inclination to read the Latin translations of the Greek tragedies, which are superior in every respect to the Italian version. After arming myself with fortitude, I engaged an excellent instructor, who put into my hands the fables of Phædrus, which to his great astonishment and my shame, he soon perceived I did not understand, though I had explained them when only ten years of age. In fact, I wholly mistook the sense, whenever I attempted to render them into Italian. As soon as my instructor discovered the quantum of my ignorance, and knew the firmness of my resolution, he exchanged Phædrus for Horace, observing: "From the difficult we will descend to that which is more easy, and this first task will be more worthy of you; let us commit trespasses against the Prince of Lyric poets, in order that he may render others more intelligible to us."

In this way we entered on Horace, and from the beginning of January till the month of March, by dint of perseverance, after much guessing and blundering, I succeeded in rendering myself capable of understanding all the odes of this poet. This study cost me much labour, but it also proved of the greatest utility, since it improved me in a knowledge of grammar without compelling me to relinquish the study of poetry. During this period I unceasingly pursued the study of the Italian poets. Besides those of the first rank, and especially Dante and Petrarch, which I read five times over in the space of four years, constantly writing notes on them during my progress, I likewise perused others, such as Politian and Cassa. I occasionally made some attempts in dramatic poetry, and had already metamorphosed my tragedy of Philippe into verse. Though this piece was much superior to that of Cleopatra, the versification was yet languid, feeble, and prolix. I had reduced it from two thousand to fourteen hundred verses; still however the public were disgusted

with its prolixity, though it was certainly rendered, by being thus compressed, much more energetic and comprehensive than as it stood in the original manuscript.

The languor and feebleness of my style made me readily perceive, that I should never succeed in expressing myself happily in Italian, while I continued to translate my own works from the French. I took in consequence the resolution of travelling into Tuscany, with a view to improve myself in the Tuscan style. I set out with this intention in the month of April, 1776, hoping that a stay of six months would serve to *unfrenchify* me. I soon, however, found that this period would be insufficient to destroy a habit which had been rooted in my mind for upwards of ten years. Encumbered with very little baggage, and attended only by a small retinue, I pursued my route by the way of Parma and Placentia. Animated by the hope of acquiring future fame, with an Edition of my favourite poets in my pocket, I travelled only by short stages, sometimes in my carriage, and at other times on horseback. Father Paciau-

di introduced me while at Parma Modena and in Tuscany to almost every individual who possessed any degree of reputation in the republic of letters. I now courted their company as much as I had shunned it formerly. At Parma I got acquainted with the celebrated Bodoni, and it was at this place I first saw a printing apparatus. Though I had visited both Madrid and Birmingham, which could boast of containing two of the most celebrated printing-presses in Europe, I had never seen a single type, nor any of the other utensils which were destined either to exalt or lower me in the estimation of posterity. I could not certainly have viewed a finer establishment than that which I here saw, nor could I have met with a man more amiable and intelligent than Bodoni. He gave me all the information I could wish respecting an art, which he has contributed so much to bring to perfection.

I thus every day continued to emerge from the long and profound lethargy in which I had been plunged; I saw many things, and acquired much knowledge,

though it must be confessed somewhat too late. What appeared to me most important was, to ascertain the exact measure of my intellectual faculties, in order that I might not deceive myself with respect to the species of literature which it behoved me to cultivate. This study of myself was not however so new to me as many others; for I had accustomed myself at an early period not only to reflect much, but frequently even to commit my reflections to writing. I still retain in my possession a kind of diary, which I regularly continued for several months; in which I noted down not only my habitual follies, but even my thoughts, and the motives of my actions. This, while it served as a mirror to reflect my faults, enabled me at the same time to discover how I might rectify time.

I had begun this journal in French, but I afterwards continued it in Italian. It was ill written in both languages, though it certainly displayed many striking traits of originality. I soon however became weary of it, and I did well, for besides wasting my time and my ink, I found it

became of less use to me every day. I mention this fact as a proof of the power I possessed of discovering my literary capacity or incapacity on any subject. Being once able to distinguish what I wanted from the little I inherited from nature, I proceeded still a step farther, in order to discriminate among the qualities in which I was deficient, those it would be possible fully or only partially to acquire, and those in short which were unattainable by me. If I derived not complete success from this kind of study, I at least owe to it my never having attempted any species of composition to which I felt not a natural and irresistible impulse—an impulse, which in the fine arts, even when the work is not wholly successful, is readily distinguished from coercive efforts, though these may sometimes produce a work regular in all its parts.

At Pisa I was introduced to all the celebrated literati of the place, from whom I derived every possible advantage in the prosecution of my studies. I was greatly puzzled and perplexed how to

interrogate them with such address as not openly to betray my own ignorance, and in order to appear as if I knew something, when in fact I knew nothing, not that I wished, had it even been in my power, to hold myself up as learned, but because I was so thoroughly unacquainted with a multiplicity of subjects, that I felt ashamed when in the company of strangers. It seemed that in proportion as my mental darkness disappeared, the phantom of my fatal ignorance became more prominently conspicuous; my boldness however proportionally augmented, so that while I willingly rendered homage to others, I became no longer appalled by my own ignorance. I was convinced that in order to compose tragedies, a vigorous comprehension is an essential requisite, and this cannot be acquired. It therefore only remained for me to learn, and certainly this was no easy task, the art of imparting to others the sensations I myself experienced.

During the six or seven weeks I resided at Pisa, I conceived the plan of my tragedy of Antigone, which I wrote in very

tolerable Tuscan prose. I transformed Polinice into verse, which was much superior to that of Philippe. I read the first of these pieces to some of the professors of the university. They appeared to be very well satisfied with it, only censuring occasionally a few expressions, but without criticising it with that severity it deserved. Though the conceptions and versification were in a few detached portions far from being unhappy, yet the piece as a whole, in my opinion, was too languid and insipid to excite much interest: according to them, however, the style was sometimes incorrect, though smooth and sonorous; in short, so completely were our opinions at variance, that what I called languid and insipid they termed smooth and sonorous. With respect to the incorrectness of the style, this was a mere matter of fact and not of taste, and therefore could afford no cause for dispute.

No controversy indeed occurred betwixt us, even in regard to those points concerning which we disagreed, as each played his part too well, they as professors, and I as a

humble scholar: nevertheless, I firmly resolved to be guided by my own opinion. I was taught by these gentlemen what I ought to avoid, and I flattered myself that I had learned from reflection and experience what I ought to do. If I were inclined to amuse the reader at the expence of these learned men, as they perhaps amused themselves at mine, I could name those among them who advised me to study the Tancia of Buonarotti, though not as a model of dramatic composition, at least as calculated to afford me much aid, in respect to richness of language and harmony of style. It was like proposing to an historical painter to study Calot. Others of them pointed out to me the style of Metastasio as well adapted for tragedy: the fact is, that no one of these literati knew much of the subject.

During my stay at Pisa I executed a literal translation in prose of Horace's Art of Poetry, that I might familiarize myself with his excellent and ingenious precepts. I likewise began to read Seneca's tragedies; but though I perceived they were written

in opposition to the rules of Horace, yet I was so struck with some passages of the true sublime, that I endeavoured to render them into blank verse. This contributed not only to improve my Italian and Latin, but also my powers of versification and expression. By this employment I perceived the great difference which exists between epic and iambic verse, the measure of which alone is sufficient to enable us to distinguish colloquial poetry from every other species of verse. I likewise became sensible that for us, who have only employed the verse of eleven syllables in epic composition, it was necessary to form an arrangement of words, of sounds perpetually varied and broken, of phrases short and energetic, which distinguish tragic from all other kinds of blank verse, as well as from every species of rhyme, whether epic or lyric. The iambics of Seneca convinced me of this truth, and perhaps furnished me with the means of putting it into practice. I remarked that the boldest and most masculine strokes of this author derived the half of their sublimity from broken and disjointed

metre. In fact, what man is so wholly devoid of sentiment and ear as not to perceive the extreme difference between these two verses, the one taken from Virgil, who wishes to charm his reader—

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum;

the other from Seneca, who aims to astonish and strike terror into the breasts of his auditors, by characterizing in two words two very different personages:

Concede mortem.
Si recusares, darem.

On this account, never should an Italian tragic author, in the most impassioned or dreadful moments, put into the mouths of his dramatis personæ lines, which resemble in sound the sublime verses of our epic muse.

Chiama gli abitator dell'ombre eterne,
Il rauco suon della Tartarea tromba.

Convinced of the necessity of preserving a complete distinction between the two styles, a distinction so much the more diffi-

cult for us other Italians, as it is necessary to confine ourselves strictly within the limits of the same metre, I gave very little attention to what the literati of Pisa said with regard to the foundation of the dramatic art, or as to the style that ought to be employed; but I listened with the greatest deference and patience to every thing which related to grammatical and Tuscan purity, though the Tuscans of the present day do not excel in this last respect.

Thus then in less than one year I became the possessor of three other tragedies, viz. Philippe, Polinice, and Antigone. The first of these was founded on the story of Don Carlos, by the Abbé Saint Real, a romance which I had read several years before. The Rival Brothers of Racine furnished me with the idea of the second; and Bentivoglio's translation of the twelfth book of Statius suggested the ground-work of the third. Some lines which I had found in Racine and others, derived from a piece of Eschylus, translated by Father Brumoi, determined me never to read any tragedies

which treated of the same subjects as those on which I undertook to write, that I might avoid the reproach of having pilfered from them, and that I might be certain what I did, whether well or ill executed, belonged to me alone. He who reads much before entering on the task of composition, often unconsciously borrows from others, and thus destroys all originality. This reason, therefore, induced me to give up, on the preceding year, the perusal of Shakespear, a circumstance which I regretted the less because I was obliged to read him in French. In proportion as this author, to whose faults I was not blind, pleased me, the more necessary did I consider it to relinquish him.

After having written my Antigone, in prose, I felt myself inspired by the reading of Seneca, and conceived at the same time Agamemnon and Orestes. Though Seneca furnished me with the idea of these two last pieces, I am certain, however, that I borrowed nothing from him. Towards the end of June I left Pisa, and went to Flo-

rence, where I resided during the whole of September, assiduously applying myself to acquire the vernacular tongue, in which I made considerable progress by frequently entering into conversation with the Florentines. From that period I began to confine myself almost exclusively to this copious and elegant language, a study so essentially requisite to correct composition.

During my stay at Florence I versified my tragedy of Philippe for the second time: I began it anew in prose, without attending to my former versification: my progress, however, in this work was so extremely slow, that it even seemed to me as if I did not advance, but remained stationary. Having casually heard, one day during the month of August, while in a circle of literary men, an historical anecdote of Don Garcias, who was murdered by his own father, Cosmo I. I was struck by the relation, and as it had never been published, it was transcribed at my request from the manuscript copy in the Archives of Florence. Thus was I first led to conceive the tragedy which bears his name. As I had no critical friend

at Florence whom I could consult occasionally, like Count Tana, and Father Paciaudi, my rhymes were at first but indifferent: I possessed however sufficient judgment and reason neither to give a copy of it, nor even to read it, except to a very few friends. This want of success, however, instead of discouraging only served to convince me of the necessity of perusing the productions of our first poets, and to fix them in my memory, in order to render myself familiar with poetic forms. Thus, during the summer, I stored my mind with the verses of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and the three first cantos of Ariosto, being fully persuaded that a day would arrive when all these forms of phraseology would become incorporated, and identified with my own thoughts.

CHAPTER III.

I assiduously devote myself to Study.

I returned to Turin in the month of October, not that I considered myself sufficiently *Tuscanized,* but because I had not made the necessary arrangements to enable me to remain longer from home. I was besides partly influenced in this determination, however frivolous it may appear, by having left my horses behind me. My passion for riding had long struggled for the mastery over my attachment to the muses, and the love of fame had not yet sufficiently established its empire over my mind to cure me of a rage for amusement, which still occasionally detached me from my studies. This I could most easily

obtain at Turin, where I possessed an excellent house, acquaintances of every description, greater opportunities of dissipation, and more numerous friends than elsewhere. Notwithstanding such occasional aberrations, I did not relax in my studies during the winter. In order to diversify my pursuits, after finishing Horace, I carefully read several other authors, and among the number Sallust. The precision and elegance of this historian delighted me so much that I determined to translate his work with great care, which I accomplished in the course of the winter. I received much improvement from this species of employment, as I carefully revised and corrected the first rude version. I know not whether the work gained any thing under my hand, but I reaped considerable advantage from it, not only by improving my knowledge of the Latin, but by the facility I acquired in Italian composition. During this period the incomparable Abbé Caluso, returned from Portugal, and finding me, contrary to his expectations, buried in literature, and firmly resolved to become a dramatic author, he

aided me by his advice and instruction with the greatest condescension and benevolence.

I likewise received assistance from the learned Count Saint Raphael, and other distinguished literati, who were all greatly my superiors in age, learning, and in the art of dramatic composition. I shall through life entertain a grateful sense of the attention I received from these distinguished personages, who suffered my extreme petulance, though it in fact daily diminished in proportion as I acquired a greater degree of knowledge.

At the termination of 1776, a circumstance occurred which gave me the greatest satisfaction that I had experienced for a long time. On going one morning to the house of Count Tana, to whom I always carried my verses with great trepidation, as soon as they were finished, I presented him a sonnet, to which he found nothing to object; on the contrary he praised it much, saying to me: "This is the first of your productions which is worthy of your name." After all the humiliations and vexation I

had suffered during a whole year that I had submitted to him my detestible poetry, which in the true spirit of friendship he had censured without mercy, the joy which I felt on listening to his sincere though unexpected eulogium may easily be conceived. This fortunate piece contained a description of the carrying away of Ganymede, in imitation of the beautiful sonnet of Cassiani upon the rape of Proserpine. It was printed in the first edition of my works. Stimulated by his praise to new exertion, I very soon compleated the other two. I took the subject from that fable, and like the former, they were imitations. The whole three may perhaps be considered as too servile a copy of the originals, but they possess the merit of being written with an elegance and perspicuity I had not hitherto attained. They all follow each other in my works, and though I had kept them some years, they were printed as they originally stood, without any material corrections. This dawn of success opened to my view a new career, and I composed during the winter several other sonnets on amatory

subjects, though they were certainly not dictated by love. I began a description of a beautiful and handsome woman, merely as an exercise in the language, and to accustom myself to rhyme. I felt no affection for any individual, as may be seen in the sonnets themselves, which are more descriptive than impassioned. As, however, the versification is good, I have preserved them in my works. The intelligent critic will be there able to remark the gradual progress I made in the difficult art of composition, without which, sonnets however well conceived and executed, can never be considered as perfect.

My evident progress in poetry, and in the prose of Sallust, whose precision I preserved without falling into obscurity, inspired me with the most sanguine hopes of success, though I had not yet been able to intimate the harmony of style which so peculiarly distinguishes this author, and which is the true characteristic of good prose.

As, however, these studies were only intended to facilitate the acquirement of a correct dramatic style, I occasionally discontinued them in order to attempt the

principal object I had in view. Thus, in the month of April, 1777, I versified Antigone, a labour which scarcely occupied me three weeks. From the rapidity with which I had performed this task, I flattered myself that I was greatly improved in this species of composition; but scarcely had I read my tragedy in a literary society which met every evening, than I perceived how much I had deceived myself, though my auditors overwhelmed me with eulogiums. I perceived with the most lively sorrow how greatly I had fallen short of the model of perfection I had proposed to myself. The praises of my learned friends convinced me, that my tragedy was not deficient in merit, so far as related to the plot and the conduct of the passions, but my ears and my judgment informed me that it was extremely defective in point of style. Of this no person could be such a competent judge, at the first reading, as myself. The interest, the emotion, and the curiosity inspired by a tragedy, with the fable of which we are unacquainted, prevent an auditor, however correct may be

his taste, from noticing the faults of style and composition, when they are not extremely prominent. But I, who was perfectly acquainted with the piece, was able to remark all the weak or false thoughts, as well as those expressions which failed in justness, strength, precision, and force of colouring.

Persuaded that I should never reach that degree of perfection I had in view while I remained in Turin, where I was frequently draw aside from study, I instantly determined to re-visit Tuscany, where my language would necessarily become daily improved; for though I never uttered a word in French at Turin, the Piedmontese jargon, in which I conversed, was ill calculated to improve my Italian style.

CHAPTER IV.

Second literary Journey to Tuscany—I contract a Friendship with Gandellini—Works commenced at Sienna.

I set out on my journey in the month of May, after having obtained the *royal permission* to leave *his happy states.* The minister to whom I preferred my request replied to me, that I had only been in Tuscany the preceding year, to which I rejoined that this was precisely the reason why I wished to return. Permission was accordingly granted, but the observation of the minister suggested the idea of a project which I executed a few months afterwards, and which rendered it henceforth unnecessary for me to request a similar permission. I proposed to prolong my stay

in Tuscany, and mingling some vanity with a praise-worthy love of glory, I resolved to proceed, attended by a great train of horses and servants. I inclined thus to exhibit the two-fold character of a poet and a great lord, which is by no means a common conjunction. With eight horses, and a correspondent number of domestics, I took the road for Genoa, where I embarked with my baggage and my coach, and sent forward, by land, my horses to Lerici and Sarzanna, where they arrived in safety. We had arrived in sight of Lerici, when a contrary breeze springing up drove us back to Rappalo, which is only two stages distant from Genoa. Here I debarked, but becoming weary of waiting for a favourable wind, I left my baggage in the felucca, and taking with me a few shirts, and my portefeuille, which I never trusted out of my sight, I crossed all these precipices of the Appennines on horseback, attended by a single servant, and arrived at Sarsana, where I found my horses, and where I waited eight days for the arrival of the felucca. Though I had the amusement

of my horses, yet as I had no books except Horace and Petrarch in my pocket, time began to hang very heavy on my hands. I therefore borrowed from a priest, who was the post-master's brother, a Titus Livius, a work which since the time I attended the classes, when I could neither comprehend nor taste its beauties, had never fallen in my way. Though an enthusiastic admirer of the precision of Sallust, I was nevertheless struck with the sublimity and majesty of Titus Livius. I read the character of Virginia, and the animated discourse of Icilius, and so powerful was the effect they produced on my mind, that I instantly conceived the idea of a tragedy, which I would certainly have finished on the spot, had not the arrival of the expected felucca diverted my thoughts, and put a stop to my design.

I ought here to explain to the reader what is meant by the *terms conceive, develop,* and *put into verse,* which so frequently occur in the course of this work. All my tragedies, so to speak, have been composed three times. By this method I at least avoided the error of too much haste, which

should always be carefully guarded against in such productions, since if they are ill-conceived at first, it is a fault not easily remedied. By the term *conceive* is to be understood the distributing of the subject into acts and scenes, fixing the number of the personages, and tracing in two pages of prose a summary of the plot. By *developing*, I mean the writing dialogues in prose for the different scenes indicated in this rude sketch, without rejecting a single thought, and with as much enthusiasm as possible, without embarrassing myself with the style or composition. By *versifying*, in short, must be understood, not only converting this prose into verse, but also curtailing the exuberances of the style, selecting the best thoughts, and clothing them in poetic language. After these three operations, I proceed like other authors, to polish, correct, and amend. But if the conception or development of the piece be imperfect, or erroneous, the super-added labour will never produce a good tragedy. In this way did I execute the whole of my dramatic works, beginning with Philippe, and I am con-

vinced that this constituted more than two thirds of the labour. If on re-perusing the manuscript, after a sufficient period had been suffered to elapse, in order that I might forget the original distribution of the scenes, I felt myself assailed by such a crowd of ideas and emotions as compelled me, so to speak, to take up my pen, I concluded that my sketch was worthy of being unfolded: but if on the contrary I felt not an enthusiasm equal at least to what I had experienced on conceiving the design, I either changed my plan, or threw the papers into the fire. As soon as I became satisfied that my first idea was perfect, I expanded it with the greatest rapidity, frequently writing two acts a-day, and seldom less than one, so that in six days my tragedy was, I will not say *finished*, but *created*.

In this manner, without any other judge than my own feelings, I have only finished those, the sketches of which I had written with energy and enthusiasm; or if I have finished any other, I have at least never taken the trouble to clothe them in verse. This was the case with Charles I. which I

began to write in French prose immediately after finishing Philippe. When I had reached to about the middle of the third act, my heart and my hand became so benumbed that I found it impossible to hold my pen. The same thing happened in regard to Romeo and Juliet, the whole of which I nearly expanded, though with much labour to myself, and at long intervals. On re-perusing this sketch, I found my enthusiasm so much repressed, that, transported with rage against myself, I could proceed no further, but threw my work into the fire.

By the method above detailed, my tragedies, notwithstanding their numerous defects, have at least the merit of uniformity; so that the phrases, the thoughts, and the action of the fifth act, are identified with the thoughts, the phrases, and the disposition of the fourth, and so on even to the first verse of the first act, which naturally keeps alive the attention of the reader, and imparts interest to the action of the piece. By this method, moreover, nothing remains for the author to do after expanding the

plot, except clothing his sentiments in verse, in separating the gold from the lead, so that the attention which he bestows on polishing his verses cannot weaken that enthusiastic inspiration which every one should blindly follow who attempts to delineate impassioned or horrific subjects. If it should be found that I have derived any advantage from this mode of composition, this little digression may not prove wholly useless to future dramatic authors. If on the contrary I should have deceived myself, a knowledge of my error may lead others to chalk out for themselves a better plan of procedure.

But to return to my narrative:—No sooner did the anxiously expected felucca arrive at Lerici than I took my baggage from on board, and departed for Pisa. Having my mind fixed on the subject of Virginia, I resolved to remain only two days in this city, flattering myself that I should reap greater improvement in point of language at Sienna, where they not only speak better, but where there is a less influx of foreigners. I dreaded besides meeting with

a beautiful, rich, and noble lady, whom I might have espoused, with the consent of her parents, and with whom I had nearly fallen in love during my former stay at this place. I was, however, now infinitely wiser, in this respect, than I had shown myself to be several years before at Turin, when I permitted my brother-in-law to demand for me the hand of another lady, who in the end rejected my suit: for this time, however, I was not inclined to pay my court to one whom I was almost certain would not refuse me. This connexion would have proved extremely convenient to me, not more on account of the character of the lady, than from other circumstances; and on the whole she certainly did not displease me. Eight years afterwards, my travels through Europe, the love of glory, a passion for study, the necessity of preserving my freedom, in order to speak and write the truth without restraint; all these reasons powerfully warned me, that under a despotic government it is sufficiently difficult even to live single, and that no one who reflects deeply will either become

a husband or a father: thus I crossed the Arno and arrived at Sienna. I have always blessed the day I reached this city, since I found in it a circle of five or six individuals possessing judgment, taste, and learning, an occurrence seldom to be met with in such a small place. Among the most distinguished of these was the respectable Francis Gori Gandellini, of whom I have several times spoken in my different writings, and a tender recollection of whose friendship will never leave me but with life. A certain similarity in our character, and manner of thinking, which was more estimable in him than in me, since we were placed in very different circumstances, and the reciprocal want of some one to whom we could unburthen our hearts, animated by the same feelings and passions, very soon united us in the most sincere and lasting friendship. I had through life ardently longed for the solace of a true friend; but my stiff and abstracted manners were ill calculated to inspire this sentiment in others, while it rendered me slow in opening my heart to its influence. On this ac-

count I had always very few friends, but I am proud to say that those I did possess were better and more estimable than myself. I sought in friendship only the reciprocal communication of the weaknesses incident to humanity, in order that the reason and benevolence of friendship might correct or meliorate whatever was reprehensible, while it strengthened and enobled what was laudable and praise-worthy in my character; such, for example, as the weakness of becoming an author. It was in this respect that the manly and candid counsels of Gandellini proved of infinite utility to me. The ardent desire I felt of meriting the esteem of this worthy man imparted new energy to my imagination, and suffered me to enjoy neither tranquillity nor repose till I had rendered my productions worthy of his approbation. I never enjoyed the complete exercise of my intellectual and creative faculties, except when my heart was occupied, and my soul, so to speak, was supported and sustained by some being whom I loved and esteemed. Every time that I was destitute of this support, I re-

garded myself as alone in the world, useless to others, and an object of interest to no one. In a state of the most deplorable melancholy, haunted by the most distressing illusions, and disgusted with life, I frequently on such occasions passed whole days, and even weeks, without either the inclination or will to open a book or take up a pen. In order, however, to earn the merited eulogy of a man so estimable in my eyes as Gandellini, I laboured during the whole summer with the most inexpressible ardour. It was this invaluable friend who suggested to me the idea of taking, as the ground-work of a tragedy the conspiracy of Pazzi.

I was unacquainted with this fact, and he advised me to take it from Machiavel in preference to every other historian. Thus, by a strange combination of circumstances, this author, who at a future period afforded me so much delight, was given to me by another sincere friend, who resembled in many respects my dear d'Acunha, though possessed of greater learning and more profound erudition. In fact, though I was

not sufficiently prepared to read the whole of Machiavel, I eagerly devoured a great many other passages besides the relation of the conspiracy above mentioned: thus I not only instantly conceived my tragedy, but, delighted with the copious, original, and nervous style of the author, I felt myself unable to resume my other studies, and proceeded to write the two books on *Tyranny*, such as they were printed several years afterwards.

If I had treated this subject anew at a more advanced period of my life, I might have displayed more erudition, and fortified my opinions by the authority of history; but I was disinclined when I printed these pieces to enfeeble, by the frost of years, and the pedantry of my little learning, the fire of youth, and that noble and just indignation which I believe is visible in every page, without being deficient in just and forcible reasoning, which, if I deceive not myself, is the characteristic feature in this little piece. I have also given it to the world with all its errors and amplifications, because they were the result of inexperience,

and not of bad intentions. This production was neither dictated by any secondary object, nor resulted from private resentment. I may perhaps have judged erroneously, or felt too keenly on this subject, though I am persuaded that a love of truth and justice, especially when we wish to imbue others with these sentiments, can never be too strongly felt. I have only written as I *felt*, I may even affirm less forcibly than I *felt*. In the ardent and unsophisticated season of youth, to judge and reason is perhaps nothing more than to feel in a noble and generous manner.

CHAPTER V.

I become at length succeptible of a sincere and durable Attachment.

HAVING thus unburthened my mind of the innate hatred I felt against tyranny, I put my little piece aside, after reading it to some of my friends, and thought no more of it. I resumed the buskin, and developed with great rapidity Agamemnon, Virginia, and Orestes. With respect to the last, I had entertained a contemptible scruple which my friend very soon dissipated. I had conceived the idea of this tragedy the year before while I was at Pisa, from reading the detestable Agamemnon of Seneca. In the winter, when turning over my books at Turin, I opened by chance a volume of Voltaire's tragedies: the first

words which struck my eyes were—*Tragedy of Orestes.* I instantly shut the book, piqued at finding a competitor among the moderns. Some men of letters, to whom I mentioned the circumstance, assured me that it was one of the best tragedies of this author, which disgusted me with my own. After having, while at Sienna, sketched my Agamemnon without even opening that of Seneca, lest I had become a plagiarist, in depicting the character of Orestes, I consulted my friend on this subject, and requested him to give me Orestes, that I might peruse it before proceeding with my own. But Gandellini refused my request, saying to me: "Write your piece without reading that of the French author; if you possess genius for a dramatic writer, it will either be worse, better, or equal to Voltaire's, but it will at least be your own." I followed this sage and dignified advice; and since that period it has been a rule from which I have never deviated. Whenever I choose a subject that has been previously adopted by a modern author, I never peruse his work till after finishing my own. If I

should have accidentally witnessed their representation, I endeavour as much as possible to forget them, or if I find this impossible, to pursue a route contrary to their's. By this method, if my productions be not perfect, they have at least the garb and appearance of originality.

The five months which I passed at Sienna proved extremely salutary to my mind. Besides the works of which I have spoken, I continued the study of the Latin classics; and among others Juvenal, which I read as frequently as I had done Horace. As the winter at Sienna is rather disagreeable, and as moreover I was not wholly cured of a desire to roam from place to place, I determined in the month of October to visit Florence, without however being fully resolved whether I should pass the winter there or return to Turin. Scarcely, however, had I arrived in that city, with the intention of remaining a month, or longer, as it should prove agreeable, than an event occurred which induced me to take up my residence in it for several years, an event which fortunately determined me to abjure

my native country, and thus acquire literary liberty, without which I should never have produced any valuable work, if indeed any of my works may be deemed worthy of such an appellation.

During the preceding summer, which I passed at Florence, I had frequently seen a beautiful, amiable, and very distinguished foreigner. It was impossible not to meet and remark this lady, and still more impossible not to seek to please when once in her company. Though a great number of the Florentine nobility, as well as most foreigners of distinction visited at her house, yet being always anxious, from my reserved and backward character, to avoid the society of beautiful and accomplished females, I declined an introduction, and contented myself with meeting her at the theatres and public walks. The first impression she made on me was infinitely agreeable. Large black eyes, full of fire and gentleness, joined to a fair complexion and flaxen hair, gave to her beauty a brilliancy it was difficult to withstand. Twenty-five years of age, possessing a taste for letters and

the fine arts, an amiable character, an immense fortune, and placed in domestic circumstances of a very painful nature, how was it possible to escape where so many reasons existed for loving?

During the autumn, one of my friends offered several times to introduce me at her house. I believed myself sufficiently fortified against her charms, but I was soon unconsciously caught in the toils of love. Still irresolute whether to resist or yield to this new passion, I took post in the month of December, and proceeded to Rome. This foolish and fatiguing journey gave rise to my sonnet on Rome, which I composed in a wretched inn at Baccana, where I could not shut my eyes. This journey occupied me only twelve days. Both in going and returning, I passed through Sienna, and visited my friend Gandellini, who disapproved not of the new chains which he perceived I was forging for myself, and which became strongly rivetted on my return to Florence. This fourth and last passion manifested itself by very different symptoms from the others. In the three former the

mind had no share, but in the present instance a sentiment of esteem, mingling with love, rendered this passion if less impetuous at least more profound and durable. Such was the love which henceforward animated and held dominion over my mind, and which will only terminate with my existence. I soon perceived that the object of my present attachment, far from impeding my progress in the pursuit of useful knowledge, or deranging my studies, like the frivolous females with whom I was formerly enamoured, urged me on by her example to every thing dignified and praise-worthy. Having once learned to know and appreciate so rare and valuable a friend, I yielded myself up entirely to her influence. I deceived not myself, twelve years afterwards, at the moment I am writing; and at an age when the illusions of the passions have ceased to operate, I feel that I become daily more attached to her, in proportion as time destroys the brilliancy of her fleeting beauty, the only charm which she owes not to herself. Whenever I reflect on her virtues,

my soul is elevated, improved, and tranquillized, and I dare to affirm that the feelings of her mind, which I have uniformly endeavoured to fortify and confirm, are not dissimilar to my own.

CHAPTER VI.

I transfer all my Property to my Sister—My second Fit of Avarice.

CALM and tranquil, I then began to labour like a man who had at last attained the object of his wishes. I resolved never again to quit Florence, while the object of my affection remained in it. This determination rendered it necessary that I should execute a project which I had entertained for some time.

I had always felt the weight of those chains intolerable with which I was bound to my country, and especially those which obliged the possessors of fiefs to obtain permission of the king before they could leave the kingdom for however short a period. This permission, which was some-

times obtained with difficulty, and granted with a bad grace, was always limited. I had already requested this permission four or five times, and although I had never been refused it, yet I could not reconcile myself to the steps which were requisite to obtain it. This law I considered unjust in its principle, since neither younger sons, nor the citizens of any class, when not in business, were subjected to it. My repugnance to this species of tyranny became greater as I advanced in years. The last time I had obtained this permission, it was accompanied with some expressions which gave me much vexation. Besides, the number of my works had gradually increased; Virginia, which I had written with all the freedom that the subject required; the work on tyranny dictated, by an author who should have lived in a country really free; the emotions of pleasure I had felt on perusing Tacitus, Machiavel, and the few other authors who like them think with energy and freedom; the knowledge of my pursuits, and the impossibility of remaining at Turin, if I inclined to publish any work

inimical to the existing tyranny; the danger which I should experience by remaining subject to the laws of Sardinia, wherever I might be, if I printed any thing of this kind, even in foreign countries; all these reasons, conjoined to the passion I had happily imbibed, determined me to expatriate myself, and relinquish for ever a country which had given me birth, but which despotism had rendered an unfit abode for one resolved to think for himself.

Several means of executing this project presented themselves. I might have endeavoured to get my permission prolonged from year to year, which perhaps would have been the wisest measure; but I could not endure a state of uncertainty; and how could I reckon on that which depended on the will of others? I might, by means of finesse and chicanery, have disposed of my property by clandestine sales, in order to escape from my noble prison. But these means I regarded as dishonourable; and they displeased me, perhaps also because they were not in extremes. Accustomed besides from my character to put all to the

hazard, I firmly resolved to terminate this affair at once, to which I must again and again have recurred, unless I had renounced the glory of becoming an independent author. Once determined, I exerted all my strength to attain the object I had in view, and I did well, though at the time I acted more perhaps under the influence of my ardent feelings than of reason. Certain it is, that had I not adopted prompt measures, or if I had begun to print even the most harmless writings in any other state, the thing would have become impossible, and my subsistence, my glory, and my liberty would have remained subject to the will of an absolute prince, who necessarily wounded by my manner of thinking and writing, and my free and uncourteous behaviour, would never have consented to allow me to escape from his power.

A law existed at this time in Piedmont which ran thus: "It is enacted that no one shall print books or other writings out of our states, without permission of our censors, under the pain of incurring a fine of seventy crowns, or corporal punishment,

if circumstances render it necessary to exhibit a public example." To this law is subjoined another still more iniquitous, worded in the following manner: "Those subjects who inhabit our states, shall never absent themselves without our express authority in writing." Hence it is evident, I could not be both *a subject* of his majesty of Sardinia and *an author*. I chose the latter, and being an enemy to all chicane and subterfuge, I took the most direct road to disfranchise myself, by resigning the whole of my property to my sister Julia, who had married Count Cumiana. This resignation was executed in the most solemn and irrevocable manner. I only reserved to myself an annuity of fourteen thousand livres of Piedmont, which amounted to little more than one half of my original revenues. I would even have been contented to resign the other half to have purchased the freedom of thinking and writing, and the liberty of chusing my place of residence. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the delays and embarrassments I experienced before I could terminate this affair; the

legal forms, and the necessity of transacting the business by letter, occupied much time. It was necessary besides to obtain the usual permission from the king, who interfered in all the domestic concerns of his subjects. It was also requisite, that my brother-in-law should receive the royal permission to accept this gift, and to remit my annuity to any country where I might fix my abode. The least clear-sighted perceived that I could have no other reasons for this donation, but a desire to expatriate myself. It was consequently absolutely necessary that permission should also be obtained from the government, which might otherwise have opposed its payment in a foreign country. Happily the king, who certainly knew my peculiar mode of thinking, of which I had afforded the most unequivocal proofs, was better pleased that I should leave his states than remain in them; he therefore immediately consented to my request: we were both well pleased, he to lose such a subject, and I to acquire my liberty.

I cannot help here mentioning a strange

circumstance in order to console my enemies, and make those laugh at my expence, who on examining themselves more nearly should discover that they are either less mad, or less childish than I was. To those who make the human heart their study, it will prove, that in the same character, at least in mine, the weakness of the dwarf is sometimes found united with the strength of the giant. The fact is, that even at the period when I wrote Virginia, and the work on Tyranny; when I broke the inglorious chains which bound me to my native country, I continued to wear the uniform of the King of Sardinia, though I had left his service for more than four years. What will philosophers say, when I frankly acknowledge the reason of this? It seemed to me that I looked better and handsomer in this than in any other dress. Laugh, readers; you have reason, and if you think proper, add that, like a child, I was more anxious to appear to advantage in the eyes of others than estimable in my own.

The settlement of my affairs had been protracted on various pretences, from the

month of January till November, 1778; and this desirable event was still farther delayed by my wishing to obtain from my sister the sum of one hundred thousand livres at once, in lieu of the annual revenue of five thousand. This second contract experienced more opposition than the first. The consent of his majesty being however once obtained, I placed the sum along with some others in the French funds; not that I had more confidence in his most christian majesty, than I had in the King of Sardinia, but it seemed to me that in thus disposing of my property, I would be more secure of an independence.

This was an epoch as important to me as that in which I made the gift, and I have always thought the idea and the consequences which resulted from it extremely fortunate. I did not communicate, to my fair friend, the design I had in view, till the contract was solemnly ratified. I did not wish to put her delicacy to the test, nor force her to disapprove my proceedings as contrary to my interest, or to approve them, as in many respects necessary to the duration of our

attachment. This determination was in fact the only one which could enable me to remain near her. On being made acquainted with my proceedings, she blamed me with that ingenuous candour for which she was so distinguished. But as the affair was settled beyond recal, it was necessary to reconcile herself to what had happened, and she pardoned me for not having sooner informed her of this transaction; perhaps she loved me better for my delicate silence: it was certainly impossible she could esteem me less on this account. During this period, I was anxiously endeavouring to facilitate the conclusion of my business in Turin, determined, whatever might be the consequence, to overcome every obstacle that was thrown in my way by the king, the laws, and my relations. I gave orders to Elias, whom I had left at Turin, to dispose of my furniture and silver plate. By his unremitting assiduity, he realized in two months six thousand sequins, for which I desired him to obtain bills of exchange payable on Leghorn. By some accident three weeks elapsed between the writing of

my letter, and the execution of the orders contained in it, during which I neither received any communication from Turin, nor a letter of advice from my banker. Though of a character naturally devoid of suspicion, I could not wholly divest my mind of it in the present instance, especially as Elias had on every other occasion displayed the greatest promptitude and exactness. Distrust being thus excited, my ardent imagination made me regard as certain an event which was only possible. During fifteen days, I was firmly persuaded that the six thousand sequins had disappeared along with the good opinion which my faithful domestic had so justly inspired. Supposing this to have been the case, I found myself in the most perplexing situation imaginable; the affair with my sister was not fully arranged; my brother-in-law continued to throw new difficulties in the way of a settlement, and this was always done in the name of the king. I at length became so indignant at this unworthy treatment, that I intimated to Count Cumiana, if he did not chuse to accept of the donation, he had only to take

possession of my property, as it was my fixed determination never to return to my country, and that I held their king and their money in equal contempt. I was in short perfectly determined to expatriate myself, even at the risk of becoming a beggar. In this painful state of uncertainty, pale misery already presented herself before my eyes. In the delirium of my imagination, ever fertile in conjuring up gloomy ideas, the mode of procuring a subsistence which most frequently occurred to me, was that of commencing *horse-breaker*, in which I believed myself to be an adept. It seemed to me that this would be less slavish, and that I could join with it poetry, as it is more easy to write tragedies in a *stable* than in a *court*. Fortunately, however, the bills of exchange from Elias at length arrived.

Before experiencing all these chimerical afflictions, I had, as soon as the deed of gift was executed, sent back all my domestics except one and a cook, and these I parted with a short time afterwards. Though I had always been very moderate in the

indulgences of the table, I contracted from this period the salutary habit of the strictest sobriety. I wholly left off the use of wine, coffee, and similar luxuries. I confined myself to the use of baked or boiled rice for several years.

With respect to my horses, I had sent four of them to Turin, to be sold along with those I had left in that city. I made a present of four others to some Florentine nobles, who in fact were only casual acquaintances, but who, possessing less pride than myself, accepted my gift. I presented my clothes to my valet, for it was at this period that I sacrificed my Sardinian uniform. Hence forward I dressed in black in the evening, and wore dark blue in the morning, colours which I have never since relinquished, and which I will continue to wear through life. Thus I gradually restricted myself to the most simple necessaries, so that my avarice returned with the relinquishment of my property.

Thus prepared for every possible event, I placed my six thousand sequins in the French funds; and as I had always a ten-

dency to run into extremes, I carried my economy so far, that at length it almost degenerated into the most sordid avarice: I say *almost*, for I still continued daily to change my linen, and to pay the most minute attention to my person: but had my stomach been consulted in writing this life, it would have cancelled the word *almost*, and substituted *very sordid* in its room. This I believe was the second and last fit of this shameful vice, which contracts and degrades the mind. Although I was perpetually endeavouring to devise some new modes of retrenchment, I yet laid out considerable sums of money in the purchase of books. I procured all our best Italian works, and a great number of the most valuable editions of the Latin classics. These I devoured at different intervals one after the other, but did not reap the same advantage I should have done by reading them more slowly, and especially with a good commentary. I had only been able lately to read these cursed commentaries. In my youth it was more consonant to the indolent state of my mind to conjec-

ture the import of difficult passages, or to skip over them, than to have recourse to the notes for an elucidation.

In the course of this year, 1778, I finally arranged my pecuniary concerns. I likewise continued to pursue my literary occupations, though my present situation was extremely unfavourable for bringing them to a state of perfection, especially as a new obstacle had occurred to prevent my progress in the Tuscan language. My inestimable friend was at that time wholly unacquainted with Italian, which compelled me to converse with her in French. I endeavoured however to counteract the gallicisms I thus acquired by carefully perusing, during the rest of the day, a portion of our prolix though excellent prose writers of the fourteenth century.

At length I prevailed upon my worthy friend to learn the Italian, in the acquirement of which she succeeded better than any other foreigner I ever knew. She pronounced it in a tone equally mellifluent as the native females of any of the Italian states, even Rome itself, who all mangle it

in such a manner as to be extremely disagreeable to an ear accustomed to the true Tuscan accent. In a short time we conversed in no other language; but as her house was always crowded with foreigners, my poor Tuscan experienced constant martyrdom. Of all the vexations I underwent during the three years I remained in Florence, this was the greatest, and it pursued me during the whole course of my life, since chance always condemned me to listen to this barbarous jargon. Hence, if it be found that I have written the Tuscan with purity, correctness, and ease, I must be allowed double merit, on account of the obstacles I had to encounter, and if I have failed, these must plead my excuse.

CHAPTER VII.

I continue to prosecute my literary Labours with the greatest Ardour at Florence.

During the year 1778, after I had completed the versification of Virginia, and the greatest part of Agamemnon, I was seized by an acute disorder of an inflammatory nature, which forced my physician to prescribe blood-letting. My strength was hereby much reduced, and my convalescence proved slow and tedious. My malady originated from mental agitation, the consequence of domestic embarrassments, from effects of study, and the influence of love. Though I had settled my affairs in the course of the last year, and no longer felt any disquiet on that head, yet

the influence of love and study, which augmented every day, soon deprived me of that corporeal vigour which exercise and incessant travelling during ten years had imparted to my constitution.

About the commencement of summer, however, my health was re-established, and I devoted much of my time to study. Of all the seasons, the summer is my greatest favourite. In proportion as the heat is excessive I find my spirits revive, and become more particularly fitted for composition. During the month of May, in this year, I began a small poem on the death of Duke Alexander, who was slain by Lorenzo de Medici. Though I was highly pleased with the subject, I did not yet find in it sufficient for the ground-work of a tragedy. I composed it in detached portions, without any previous sketch, solely for the purpose of improving me in rhyme, from which my attention had been diverted by writing so frequently in blank verse. I wrote also some amatory pieces, equally with the view of celebrating the mistress of my affections, and of dissipating the chagrin I felt on ac-

count of the domestic circumstances in which she was placed.

All the other amatory verses in my works, which follow after the sonnet,

Negri, vivaci, in dolce fuoco ardenti,

were inspired by her, for I certainly never chaunted the praises of any other female. Without entering on the question of their real merits, it seems to me that the feelings which impelled me to write, and which daily became augmented, may be clearly traced throughout these little pieces. This I conceive is more particularly distinguishable in those which were written during the period fate separated us from each other.

I return to the occupations which engaged my attention during the year 1778. In the month of July, finding myself inspired with sentiments of liberty, I sketched the plan of my tragedy of Pazzi, and subsequently that of Don Garcias. Shortly afterwards, I conceived, and distributed into chapters, my three Essays on Government and Literature: but as I did not find expressions at the time answerable to my ideas, I suspended my labour, that I might

not be again under the necessity of remoulding it, when I should resume the subject in order to its correction. In August my fair friend having suggested the celebrated Mary Stuart as a proper subject for my pen, I readily undertook it for her gratification. During September, I employed myself in the versification of Orestes, which terminated my labours for this year.

My days at that time glided away in almost an unruffled calm, which would have been uninterrupted but for the sympathetic feelings I experienced on account of my mistress, who was frequently treated in the most brutal and cruel manner by her old peevish and drunken husband. I participated in all her sufferings, and experienced all the bitterness of death. I could only see her in the evening, or when dining at her house; but the husband was always either present or in an adjoining apartment: this, however, did not arise from his entertaining any greater jealousy of me than of others, for during the nine years that they had lived together as man and wife, they had never visited but in company with each

other; a mode of life which even must have proved wearisome to two young lovers of the same age: I remained therefore the whole day in my study, only taking an airing in the morning on account of my health. I had indeed the happiness of seeing her in the evening; but this happiness was embittered by witnessing the sorrow which oppressed her. Without an uniform application to study, I could never have submitted to the hard necessity of seeing her so seldom, and in this manner: but if I had not likewise enjoyed, the only comfort of which I was susceptible, the happiness of seeing her, which served to reconcile me to my solitude, I should have felt an uniform application to study almost insupportable.

During the year 1779, having put the finishing hand to my dramatic work on the Conspiracy of Pazzi, I sketched Rosamunda, Octavia, and Timoleon; and after developing Rosamunda and Mary Stuart, I completed the versification of Don Garcias. I likewise finished the first canto of my poem, and entered on the second.

Amid these laborious occupations, I felt

my mind tranquillized by the presence of my mistress, and by the regular correspondence which I kept up with my absent friends. One of these, Gandellini, had travelled twice or thrice to Florence in order to see me, and the other, the worthy Abbé Caluso, arrived in this city about the middle of 1779. In taking this step he was, I flattered myself, as much influenced by the wish of seeing me, one of his most sincere friends, as from a desire of hearing the exquisite Tuscan dialect, and of devoting himself uninterruptedly to his studies, which he could not do at Turin, where a crowd of brothers, nephews, cousins, and officious friends, taking advantage of his gentle and easy temper, never left him a moment to himself. He continued nearly one year at Florence, where we saw each other daily, spending always the afternoon together. I learned from his erudite and agreeable conversation, what I should never have acquired by the perusal of books. From him I also learned to discern and appreciate the genius of Virgil, whose works till then I had merely read.

With such a model before my eyes, I endeavoured to infuse a portion of his varied and divine harmony into my own dialogues. I endeavoured likewise to imitate, as much as was admissible with the genius of our language, the concise style and the transpositions which render the versification of Virgil so strikingly different from that of Ovid and all other poets; a difference which poets can alone discern. It was necessary that I should endeavour to collect, from every quarter, modes and turns of expression, by which the mechanism of my dramatic poetry might assume an appearance and character peculiar to itself. In this species of composition, we cannot aid the versification, either by long and inflated periods, by a variety of imagery, by numerous transpositions, by the use of pompous or quaint terms, or by far-fetched epithets. The mere arrangement of words simple and full of dignity, constitutes the essence of verse, without destroying that ease necessary to dialogue. What I have here endeavoured

to express, I was not able to put into practice in my own compositions till several years afterwards; perhaps not even till I reprinted my tragedies at Paris. While I acknowledge many obligations to Dante and Petrarch, in enabling me to write tolerable verses, it is only to Virgil, Cesarotti, and my own assiduity that I stand indebted for the art of tragic composition. Before I succeeded in forming my own style, I often fell into grievous blunders, and became bombastic and obscure in order to avoid weakness and insipidity. I have already however sufficiently spoken of this in another place, when attempting to unfold the principles of style and manner of writing.

In 1780, I completed the versification of Mary Stuart. I likewise developed Timoleon, the ground-work of which was drawn from Plutarch, as well as Octavia, which was the real offspring of Tacitus, an author whom I uniformly perused with delight. I curtailed and poetised Philippe for the third time, notwithstanding which

it still displayed conspicuous traits of its exotic origin. I also versified Rosamunda and a great part of Octavia, a labour which was frequently interrupted by the chagrin and sorrow which at this time oppressed me.

CHAPTER VIII.

An Event which made me re-visit Naples, and take up my Abode at Rome.

My fair friend, as I have already said, was weighed down by sorrow. Her afflictions augmented every day; and the barbarous treatment which she suffered from her unrelenting husband induced her at length, in order to save her health and life, to consider by what means she might emancipate herself from the dominion of her cruel persecutor. Thus then was I led anew, in opposition to my character, to employ all my interest with those in power, in order to influence them to succour this innocent victim of cruelty and oppression. Fortified by the testimony of my own conscience, and by the idea that I had not

taken a single step in this affair, but for the behoof of others, and that I had uniformly given her the most prudent advice; a maxim which, though disregarded by me in the management of my own concerns, I never deviated from in counselling others; convinced, in short, that it was absolutely impossible to act otherwise, I took no pains on this occasion, nor indeed on any other, to wipe away the foolish and malignant calumnies so industriously propagated to blacken my reputation. Suffice it to say, that I rescued this worthy woman from the tyranny of a man destitute of reason, and incessantly given to intoxication, without compromising in any respect her honour, and without infringing in the smallest degree the established regulations of society. All those who witnessed the deplorable circumstances in which she was placed, and the brutal tyranny to which she was constantly subjected, must agree that it was no easy matter to conduct this affair with sufficient prudence, and to bring it to an happy issue. My unhappy friend testified a desire to visit one of the convents of

Florence. Her husband failed not to accompany her; but was very much astonished, when he was given to understand that his wife was to remain there by order of the government. Here she resided only for a short time, after which she went to Rome, at the request of her brother-in-law, who wished her to enter into a convent in that city. The reasons which actuated her to determine on a separation were so just and reasonable, that her conduct was generally spoken of in terms of approbation.

This amiable woman set out for Rome towards the end of December, while I, like a forsaken wretch, remained behind at Florence. It was then I became thoroughly sensible that without her society I should be deprived of the half of my existence. I became incapable of every occupation, and could devote myself to no serious study; nothing gave me pleasure, every thing, even glory and myself, were forgotten. In the management of this affair, it seemed as if I had only exerted myself for her benefit and my own misfortune;

since in my estimation, a greater could not befal me, than that of never again beholding her. Motives of decorum, however, prevented me immediately following her to Rome; on the other hand, to live at Florence I found impossible. I remained, however, till the end of January, 1781, and these four weeks appeared to me as so many ages. Finding no solace in reading, or any other amusement, I took at length the resolution of proceeding to Naples. This route I chose in preference to every other, because in my way thither it was necessary to pass through Rome.

One year had now elapsed since my second fit of avarice left me. I had laid out at two different times one hundred and sixty thousand francs, in the purchase of annuities in France, which secured me a certain means of livelihood independent of Piedmont. Relinquishing my penurious habits, and resuming a moderate expenditure, I purchased four horses, which however were certainly too many for a poet. My exteemed friend the Abbé Caluso had left Florence six months before this

period, and returned to Turin. Possessing neither a friend nor mistress, it seemed as if I no longer existed. Thus, on the first of February, mounting my horse, I set out for Sienna, to visit Gandellini, from whose society I expected to derive consolation. Thence I continued my journey to Rome. In proportion as I drew nearer to this city, I felt my emotion increase. The unwholesome and insalubrious country through which I passed, and which three years before had appeared to me such as it really was, I now viewed with the eyes of a lover, and considered as a terrestrial paradise.

At length I reached Rome—I saw her: my heart is yet lacerated when I reflect on it. I saw her behind a grate, less tormented it is true than she had been at Florence, but in other respects much more unhappy. We were separated, and who could say for how long a time. I shed many bitter tears, but I had at least the consolation of reflecting that her health would be re-established, that she might sleep in tranquillity, and was no longer subject to the caprice and sway of a cruel and drunken tyrant; in

short, that she would exist! These considerations contributed somewhat to assuage the anguish and melancholy I felt on the approaching separation, which circumstances rendered inevitable. I remained at Rome only a very few days, during which, such was the influence of my attachment, that in order to serve the mistress of my affections, I was led to employ expedients which I would not have practised to obtain the empire of the universe; expedients to which I never even submitted at the moment when I presented myself on the threshold of the temple of fame. Though to obtain access was extremely difficult, I never stooped to flatter and lavish incense on those who were, or pretendnd to be, its guardians: now, however, I visited and paid my court to her brother-in-law, on whom alone depended her restoration to liberty, with which he continued to flatter us. I speak not here of these two brothers, because they are already sufficiently known to the public: though time may probably have buried them in oblivion, it is not my intention to draw them out of it. If I cannot speak fa-

vourably, I wish not to speak unfavourably of them. What greater proof therefore could I give of my unbounded attachment to this inestimable woman than to have humbled myself before them?

I departed for Naples agreeable to my promise, and as delicacy required. I felt my mind much more affected by the present than our former separation at Florence. The first, which lasted only about forty days, had afforded me a fore-taste of the misery and anguish I experienced during this last, which was longer and more uncertain than the former.

The view of Naples, and its delightful environs, afforded me not that gratification which I expected to derive from them. They were no longer new to me, and my mind was a prey to sorrow. Books I found insupportable: my poetic and dramatic studies were neglected; in a word, I lived only to dispatch and receive couriers. My thoughts were wholly occupied with my fair and absent friend. I frequently took a solitary ride along the charming shores of Pausilippo and Baiæ; at other times I

pursued the road to Capua and Caserta. I almost incessantly wept, and so weighed down was I by sorrow, that I could not even flee to my accustomed occupations to assuage the oppression of my heart. It was thus that I passed my time from the month of February to the middle of May. When at any time my heart was less oppressed, I endeavoured to apply myself to study. I improved the versification of part of my Polinice. I had concluded the preceding year the second canto of my little poem, and I now felt disposed to commence the third; but I could not finish the first stanza, the subject being too lively for the gloomy state of my mind. During these four months, I did nothing but occupy myself in writing letters, and in reading a hundred times over those which I received from the object of my attachment. Her prospects, however, now began to brighten, for toward the end of March she obtained permission from his Holiness the Pope to leave the convent, and to live apart from her husband in the town mansion of her brother-in-law, who himself generally

resided at a country house not far from the city. Though my inclinations would, on this occasion, have led me to return to Rome, yet I felt that such a step was inadmissible with propriety. Nothing is more painful to an upright and feeling mind than the struggles it has to encounter when placed between love and duty.

Though I deferred my departure for Rome the whole of April, and determined to exert the same fortitude during May, yet I scarcely knew how I reached that city on the twelfth of this month. No sooner had I arrived, than, influenced by my attachment, I began to assign plausible motives for residing in this city, and to practise all the arts and obliquity of a thorough bred courtier, in order sometimes to see the woman whom I adored. Thus, then, after committing many extravagant actions, and exerting every effort to render myself independent, I became transformed into a man who visits, cajoles, and flatters like a candidate for the prelacy. All this I did, and submitted to a thousand servilities, with a view to conciliate the good

will of *prelates* and *priestlings*, who officiously interfered in the affairs of my mistress. Happily she required nothing but mere protection from her brother-in-law, as she possessed an ample fortune wholly at her own disposal.

CHAPTER IX.

I resume with Ardour my literary Labours at Rome, and finish my first fourteen Tragedies.

As soon as I could emancipate myself from this servile mode of life, and was at liberty to enjoy the society of my fair friend every evening, I again re-commenced my dramatic studies. After finishing the versification of Polinice, I devoted every moment to the completion of Antigone, Virginia, Agamemnon, Orestes, Pazzi, Garcias, and Timoleon: I likewise endeavoured, by a fourth revision, to improve my Philippe; but in this I did not succeed. In order to afford myself some respite from my dramatic studies, I prosecuted the third canto of my little poem. During the month of December of this year, I wrote, at one

stretch, the four first odes on the Independance of America. I was attracted to this subject from having read some beautiful odes by Filicaja, which greatly pleased me. I composed my four odes in seven days, and the third was finished in one. Except a few trifling alterations, I made no change in these odes, but allowed them to remain as they were originally written—so great at least did I find the difference between composing lyric odes in rhyme, and colloquial blank verse

At the commencement of 1782, finding my tragedies considerably advanced, I flattered myself with being able to finish them in the course of the year. I had proposed in my own mind not to exceed twelve, all of which I had already conceived, developed, and transformed into verse. I next proceeded to versify them a second time, to correct and polish them. This labour was performed according to the order in which I had conceived and developed them.

While engaged in these occupations, about the middle of February, 1782, the Merope of Maffei fell a second time into

my hands. Induced by the consideration that I might learn something from it with respect to style, I determined on reading it. On casting my eyes over some detached portions of it, I felt myself suddenly seized with a paroxysm of indignation and rage, on beholding Italy so wretchedly degraded, that this tragedy should be considered not only as the best that had yet been written, but be regarded as a model of perfection to all future tragic writers. At that instant I conceived, as if by magic influence, another tragedy, bearing the same name, and written on the same subject; but much more simple, impassioned, and energetic. Impelled by a kind of inspiration, I pursued the idea; whether I have succeeded others must determine. If, however, a scribbler in verse might ever with any truth exclaim, "*Est Deus in nobis,*" I might certainly affirm it on conceiving, developing, and versifying Merope. These three operations, usually executed at very distant intervals, followed each other in the present case so instantaneously, that my mind enjoyed not a moment's respite till the work was completed. I

was affected in a similar manner when I composed Saul. I had begun to read the Bible this year, during the month of March, but without order or regularity. This reading, however, so filled my brain with poetic enthusiasm, that I felt myself irresistibly impelled to write on some subject derived from it. The subject chosen was Saul, which I conceived and executed with equal rapidity as the former. It was my fourteenth tragedy, and ought to have been the last. In the course of this year, my imagination was so violently excited, that I scarcely knew whither it would have carried me, had I given reins to it. Already had two other subjects, drawn from the Bible, occurred to my imagination, but though naturally inclined to extremes, I resisted the impulse. While developing Merope and Saul, I felt so much regret in exceeding the number I had fixed on, that I mentally vowed not to proceed in their versification, till the others should be completed. In these resolutions, however, I did not persevere, for so irresistibly was I urged forward, that I felt it impossible to

return to them till these were finished. I may, however, venture to affirm that none of my dramatic productions cost me so little labour, and had been composed within so short a period, as these two last.

Towards the end of September, 1782, I copied, re-copied, and corrected all these pieces; I wish I could add polished, but this, I found some months afterwards, they were very far from having attained. Nevertheless, I then considered myself one of the first characters of the age. In ten months I had versified seven tragedies, besides conceiving, developing, and versifying two others: in a word, I had corrected fourteen. Finding some relaxation absolutely necessary after such unremitted exertion, I determined, during October, to take some repose, an indulgence which proved equally pleasing to my taste as salutary to my health. I spent a few days at this time in visiting the celebrated cascade at Terni.

Puffed up with pride, which I durst hardly acknowledge to myself, I suffered it, however, to be penetrated by her whom I regarded as my better half. Her attach-

ment to me rendered her also subject to illusion: she almost considered me as a great man, and did every thing in her power to induce me really to become so. After indulging for a few months in all the intoxication of self-love, I at length began to re-examine my tragedies, and discovered that I had yet a considerable space to run over, before I could arrive at the goal I so ardently desired to attain. As I was only, however, thirty-four years of age, and still young in the career of literature, which I had entered eight years before, I did not despair of one day acquiring the palm. I suffered not, however, these hopes to evaporate in words, though a ray of glory had already shed its influence over my labours.

I had successively read all these tragedies in different societies composed of men of letters, literary females, others, who though not possessed of cultivated minds were yet susceptible of all the passions, and of others again who were grossly ignorant, and wholly destitute of education. In reading them, it is true, I had utility not praise in view; I knew the world, and especially the great

world, too well to be inflated with pride, or stupidly to believe in any praises which flow not from the heart, but which cannot well be refused by a well-bred audience to an author who makes no pretensions, and who fatigues himself by reading his productions for their amusement. I estimated therefore the eulogiums I received at their true value, but I knew how to appreciate, and was extremely attentive to the praise and disapprobation of *looks*, if I may be permitted to employ the expression.

Whenever twelve or fifteen individuals are assembled together, such as I have described, the general feeling which pervades this assembly will very much resemble that of a pit in a theatre. Though not compelled to be present, and though politeness requires that they should appear to be satisfied, it is nevertheless impossible to conceal the coldness and ennui they may feel, and still more so, to assume a lively interest in what is going forward, or to display an ardent curiosity to reach the development of the plot. As an auditor can neither command his features, nor fix himself to his seat,

his countenance and motions must afford a sufficient indication to an author respecting the sensations which his work is calculated to produce. This was almost the sole object I had in view by reading my pieces; and I thought I could remark, that during two thirds of the time my hearers gave to them an undivided attention, and that their anxiety redoubled on approaching the catastrophe. This proved that, even in the most familiar tragic subjects, a degree of suspense and uncertainty is kept up to the very conclusion. I must here also acknowledge, that those tedious and languid passages, which fatigued and disgusted me on a reperusal were done ample justice to by the eternal yawnings, involuntary coughs, and restless motions of my hearers, who in this manner afforded me, without intending it, the most salutary counsel: neither do I wish to deny that I have received the most just and excellent advice from men of letters, men of the world, and even from the ladies. The former criticised my elocution, and my composition, the second entered into the merits of the plot, and the adaptation

of the characters, while the ladies spoke of the conduct of the passions: all these remarks proved of the greatest benefit to me: even the groaning and contortions of the ignorant part of my auditors were not destitute of utility. I listened to every thing, and treasured it up in my memory. I neglected no means of improvement, and despised not advice, from whatever quarter it came, that had the smallest tendency to improve my productions. I must add to these my confessions, that, I clearly perceived, a stranger like myself, who reads his works in different circles, which are not always composed of friends, must not expect wholly to escape ridicule. I repent not, however, my compliance in this respect, if it has tended to render my productions more perfect; but if no such effect has resulted from it, to the absurdity of these readings must be joined the still greater folly of causing my tragedies to be represented and published.

CHAPTER X.

Representation of my Antigone at Rome—I print my four first Tragedies—Painful Separation—Journey to Lombardy.

While anxiously brooding over my future literary fame, and irresolute whether I ought to commit any of my works to the press, or whether it would not be more prudent still to procrastinate their publication, a middle path presented itself: this was to procure the representation of some one of my pieces by a select company of amateurs, who performed for their own amusement in a private theatre, fitted up in the palace of the Duke of Grimaldi, the Spanish ambassador. Previous to this period, they had represented only some very indifferent translations of French tra-

gedies and comedies. I had myself assisted at the performance of the Earl of Essex, by Corneille, in which the Dutchess of Zagarolo acted the part of Queen Elizabeth very indifferently. Notwithstanding, I clearly perceived that this lady, who was extremely beautiful, and possessed great dignity of mien, fully understood the character, and that with some instruction she would become an excellent actress. Actuated by this idea, I resolved to bring forward one of my pieces on this private theatre. I wished by this means to ascertain how far the mode of writing I had adopted, which consisted in simplicity of action, the introduction of very few personages, and that species of irregular verse which precluded, the monotonous *cantilena,* as it is termed, would be attended with success. For this purpose I selected Antigone, the least impassioned of all my tragedies, conceiving that if it succeeded, the others, which were written in a bolder and more nervous style, would still more certainly succeed. My proposal was eagerly embraced by the noble group; but as at that

time none could be found among them capable of taking a principal part, excepting the Duke of Ceri, brother to the Dutchess of Zagarolo, I was compelled to assume the character of Creonte, while the Duke of Ceri undertook that of Emone; his Lady played Argia, and Antigone, the most prominent character of the piece, fell necessarily to the share of the majestic Dutchess of Zagarolo. As soon as proper arrangements could be made, the piece was immediately brought forward. I shall say nothing here respecting the performance, since it is my intention to speak more at large on this subject elesewhere.*

Inflated with the success I had obtained at the commencement of 1783, I resolved to subject myself to the fiery ordeal of printing my work. Though this step then appeared to me very hazardous, I knew not to what I exposed myself, till I afterwards became acquainted with the cabals of literary men, the hatred of booksellers, the decisions of reviewers, the babbling of newspapers, and, in short, with all

* See ths last edition of Alfieri's work.

the train of evils to which an author subjects himself who appears before the public for the first time. So utterly were all these things then unknown to me, that I knew nothing even of the nature of those periodical journals and reviews, which assume the previlege of criticising and passing judgment on new publications.

Finding it was difficult to obtain the sanction of the censors of the press at Rome to the printing of my works, I wrote to my friend at Sienna to entreat him to take charge of them. This he not only undertook with the greatest readiness, but even promised to superintend the press, and to employ some one of my acquaintances, on whose attention I could rely, in order to accelerate the completion of the work. It was not my intention, at this time, to risk the publication of more than four of my tragedies. Of these I transmitted to my friend the manuscript, which though accurately written, and carefully corrected, was yet very deficient in clearness, elegance, and purity of style. I then was simpleton enough to suppose that the labour of

an author was at an end when he had sent his manuscript to the press, but I afterwards learned to my cost that it is then only it commences.

While these four tragedies were printing, I remained at Rome in a state of the greatest anxiety and mental perturbation. Had shame not prevented me, I would have recalled my manuscript. They at length arrived in succession: the printing was very ill executed, but my friend had attended with the greatest care to the correction of the press; and I had the mortification to perceive in the end, that the versification was extremely barbarous. The childishness of running through the different families in Rome, and presenting them with handsome bound copies of my tragedies, with the view of securing their approbation, occupied me several days, and rendered me not only ridiculous in the eyes of others, but even in my own. I laid a copy at the feet of Pope Pius VI. to whom I had been presented the year before on coming to reside at Rome. It is here necessary to mention a weakness of which I was guilty during the

audience which had been vouchsafed me by the Holy Father. I entertained no very profound veneration for his Holiness as Pope, and still less for Braschi as a man of letters, or the patron of literature, since I considered him as neither the one nor the other. I presented him my elegantly bound little volume, which he received with much affability. He opened the book, laid it on his table, and turning over and over the leaves, overwhelmed me with praises. He would not permit me to kiss his foot, but raising me from the humble posture into which I had thrown myself, he patted me on the cheek with a grace truly paternal. Notwithstanding the sonnet I had written on Rome, which stared me in the face, I replied to these compliments like a thorough bred courtier; and taking advantage of the praise which he bestowed on *Antigone*, and the success which attended its representation, I seized the moment when his Holiness was descanting on the dignity of the tragic art, and when he inquired if I had composed any other tragedies, to reply that I had finished

several, and among others Saul, the groundwork of which was drawn from the Bible, and that I would dedicate it to his Holiness if he would deign to grant me his permission. The Holy Father excused himself by saying that he could not agree to have any theatrical pieces dedicated to him, of whatever kind they might be. To this refusal I made no reply. I must here acknowledge, however, that I experienced two distinct and separate mortifications, which were both well merited; the one from the refusal I had voluntarily sought; the other from being forced to esteem myself less than the Pope, for my cowardice, weakness, and duplicity; for unquestionably my conduct proceeded from one of these three motives, or perhaps the whole of them combined, which had induced me to offer, as a mark of respect and esteem, to dedicate my work to one whom I considered as far beneath me in the scale of real merit. It is also necessary, not to justify myself, but in order to explain the real or apparent contradiction which may be observed between my manner of thinking, perceiving, and

acting, that I should here ingenuously explain the sole and true reason which determined me thus to prostitute the buskin to the tiara.

For some time past the priesthood, instigated by the brother-in-law of my adored friend, had officiously propagated many calumnies respecting the frequency of my visits to this inestimable female. This noise daily augmented, and I endeavoured, by flattering the sovereign pontif, to secure to myself a support against the persecutions I already anticipated, and which actually burst over my head in less than a month. I even believe that the representation of Antigone, by attaching a degree of celebrity to my name, provoked and multiplied my enemies. Love then taught me cowardice and dissimulation. I wish that those who read this trait may be able to laugh at me without recognising themselves in the picture. I inclined, both for my own profit and the benefit of others, to unveil this circumstance, which I might have buried in oblivion: with-held by shame, I never related it to a single

individual, except my dearly cherished friend, a short time after it occurred. I have recorded it here for the consolation of present and future authors, who, by some melancholy circumstance, may be forced to dishonour themselves and their profession by fulsome dedications; in short, that my enemies may say with justice and truth, if I have not debased myself by such meannesses, I owe it to my fortune, which never compelled me either to become or to appear contemptible.

In the month of April, 1783, the husband of my friend fell dangerously ill at Florence. His brother set out with the greatest expedition, in order, if possible, to see him before his death; but the malady had disappeared as quickly as it commenced, and he found him entirely out of danger. During his convalescence, which continued about fifteen days, the priests who accompanied the brother united with those who attended the patient, in order to convince the former that he ought no longer to tolerate in his house the conduct of his sister-in-law.

I intend not here to become the apologist of the mode of life led by married women in general at Rome, and in all the rest of Italy: I will only say, that the conduct of my esteemed friend was in this respect rather within than beyond the usual manners of the country. I will also add, that the vices and cruelties of her husband were not invented to answer a purpose, but were evident to the whole world. Justice, at the same time, compels me to confess that the husband, the brother-in-law, and the priests, had reason to disapprove of my frequent visits, though our intimacy never exceeded the strictest limits of honour. I am only sorry that the zeal of these priests, who were the sole promoters of this cabal, was neither evangelical nor exempt from secondary views, since the example of many of them afforded an ample apology for our conduct. In all that they did they were certainly neither actuated by religion nor virtue, but only by motives of malevolence and revenge. Scarcely had my brother-in-law returned to Rome than he informed my friend, through the medium of her confes-

sor, that it was indispensible my assiduities should cease, and that it had been agreed on between him and her husband not any longer to tolerate my visits. Afterwards, this violent and inconsiderate man, as if he had been inclined to treat the affair with the greatest decency, made a great bustle in the city, spoke of it to every one, and even addressed complaints to the Pope. This gave rise to a rumour that his Holiness had ordered me to leave Rome, which was in fact not the case, though it had been credited with the greatest facility—thanks to the liberty enjoyed in Italy. I recollected, however, while I was at the academy, in order to prevent my peruke being forcibly taken from me, I had fallen upon it in sport; thus I avoided an affront; and I now determined in like manner to depart voluntarily. To this effect I addressed myself to the Sardinian minister, and entreated him to inform the secretary of state, that having heard the calumnies which had been spread abroad, I was too much interested in the honour, the fame, and the tranquillity of the worthy and respectable female who was

the object of them, not to adopt every means in my power to put an end to such unmerited clamour; that I had therefore resolved to leave Rome for some time, and would set out on the commencement of the following month, May, 1783.

This spontaneous, and to me painful resolution, was highly gratifying to the minister, and approved by the secretary of state, the Pope himself, as well as all those who were acquainted with the real state of the case. I immediately prepared for my departure. What still farther determined me to take this step was the melancholy and terrible life which I foresaw I must have led, had I remained at Rome, after being precluded from visiting my friend at her own home. I should have been exposed to continual vexation and chagrin, had I attempted to hold intercourse with her elsewhere, either openly, or employed secret means to accomplish this end, which must have proved equally dangerous as useless. To remain at Rome, without seeing each other, was to me a punishment so severe, that I regarded it as more insupportable

than removing to a distance, and waiting a more auspicious period to renew our intercourse.

On the fourth of May, 1783, a day which will always be recollected by me with sentiments of the most bitter sorrow, I bade adieu to that being who was dearer to my heart than all the world besides. My despair at our present separation was more terrible than on any former occasion of the same kind, as the hope of seeing her again was extremely uncertain.

For two years I remained incapable of any kind of study whatever, so different was my present forlorn state from the happiness I enjoyed during my late residence in Rome: there, the Villa Strozzi, near to the warm baths of Diocletian, afforded me a delightful retreat, where I passed my mornings in study, only riding for an hour or two through the vast solitudes which in the neighbourhood of Rome invite to melancholy, meditation, and poetry. In the evening I proceeded to the city, and found a relaxation from study in the society of her who constituted the charm of my exist-

ence, and contented and happy I returned to my solitude, never at a later hour than eleven o'clock. It was impossible to find in the circuit of a great city an abode more cheerful, more retired, or better suited to my taste, my character, and my pursuits. Delightful spot! the remembrance of which I shall ever cherish, and which through life I shall long to re-visit.

Leaving thus my only friend, my books, my retreat, my happiness, and I may say myself, at Rome, I proceeded on my way like one deprived of reason. I took the road to Sienna, where I should be at liberty to pour my sorrows into the bosom of my friend. I neither knew nor cared where I went, nor what was to become of me. The conversation of this incomparable man afforded the only solace to my grief. Notwithstanding the strength and elevation of his own mind, he was tender, compassionate, and humane towards the weaknesses of others. It is only when weighed down by adversity that we can estimate the value of a sincere friend. I am persuaded that without the consoling cares of this worthy

man I should have sunk into a state of hopeless insanity. When he beheld my truly pitiable condition, though he knew from experience the power of virtue, he did not cruelly employ cold and severe reasoning in the delirious state of my imagination. By sharing my sorrow, it gradually became assuaged. What a precious gift from heaven is a friend, who can at the same time reason and feel!

My intellectual faculties being enfeebled or torpid, I pursued no kind of study or occupation, except writing letters, of which I may literally be said to have written volumes during this third and longest separation from my friend. I knew not what I wrote: I poured forth my grief, friendship, love, rage, and all the affections with which my lacerated heart overflowed.

So indifferent was I at this period to literary fame, that the severe critiques on my different tragedies, which had been transmitted to me from Tuscany, while I was labouring under the most profound affliction at Rome, produced no more impression on my mind than if I had not been concerned

in them. Some of them, though piquant, were written with urbanity, while others were extremely gross and insipid: several of them bore the name of the author, but not a few were anonymous. They all, however, exclusively agreed to depict my style as harsh, obscure, and inflated, but without assigning any reason for this opinion, or pointing out the faults, in this respect, of any particular passages.

On arriving in Tuscany, my friend, in order to withdraw my thoughts from sorrowful recollections, read to me extracts, in the Florence and Pisa journals, of all those critiques which had been sent to me at Rome. These were the first literary journals, in any language, which had fallen into my hands. It was then only that I penetrated into the secret of this *respectable art,* by which different works are praised or censured according as the journalist has been bribed, flattered, forgotten, or contemned by the authors. In fact, these mercenary critics produced not the smallest effect on my mind, which was wholly absorbed in other subjects.

After a stay of three weeks at Sienna, during which I confined myself solely to the society of my friend, the fear of becoming troublesome to him, as I found it impossible to occupy my mind, and an impatience for change of place, which incessantly haunted my imagination during my fits of melancholy and idleness, concurred in determining me to continue my travels. The feast of the ascension, which I had formerly witnessed at Venice, approached, and I resolved to be present at it. In my way to this city, I passed through Florence without stopping, as I could not support the sight of a place, in my present melancholy state of mind, where I had formerly spent so many happy hours. The fatigue of travelling, and the sight of new objects, produced a salutary effect on at least my health, which had been much injured by the grief and agitation I had suffered in the course of the last three months. At Bologna I left the direct road, with the view of visiting the tomb of our immortal poet at Ravenna, where I passed a whole day in melancholy meditation. During my journey

from Sienna to Venice, I daily composed one or more sonnets, replete with the most tender passion. These ideas presented themselves with such force to my imagination, that I felt myself impelled to embody them in verse. At Venice, when I first heard of the treaty of peace being concluded, by which America had stipulated for her independence, I instantly composed the fifth ode on American Independence, which terminated this little lyric poem. From Venice I proceeded to Padua, where I failed not, as I had done formerly, to visit the tomb of our master in love, the divine Petrarch. I there, as at Ravenna, consecrated a day to meditation and to verse. At Padua I became acquainted with the celebrated Cesarotti, with whose manners, vivacity, and politeness, I was as much delighted as with the perusal of his elegant translation of Ossian.

From Padua I returned to Bologna by Ferrara, in order to finish my fourth poetic pilgrimage, by viewing the tomb and the manuscripts of Ariosto. At Rome I had several times visited the mausoleum of

Tasso, as well as the spot where he first drew his breath at Sorrento, to which place I went express during my last visit to Naples. These four poets have always been, and will continue to be, prized by me above every other in our divine language. It appears to me that they afford a model of every species of poetry, except colloquial blank verse, which is particularly adapted to subjects on which they treat, only requiring to be modified in a different manner. For sixteen years that I have read these works, they have always appeared new to me: on each perusal I have discovered fresh beauties in those parts of them which are truly excellent; and even the faults of such authors are not destitute of utility. I dare not here affirm, with blind fanaticism, that they have never written indifferent, and even detestable verses, I only contend, that valuable lessons may be learned even from their defects. In forming a judgment of their merits, it is necessary, however, to enter into their intentions, and be well acquainted with their motives: it is necessary also not only to comprehend

and taste their beauties, but to feel them. From Bologna, still suffering the most profound melancholy, I proceeded to Milan, on a visit to my dear friend the Abbé Caluso, who was in the country with his nephews at his beautiful chateau of Masino, a short distance from Verceil. Here I remained five or six days. Being so near Turin, I was ashamed not to visit my sister. Thither therefore I went, in company with my friend. We remained only a single night, and next morning returned to his house.

On giving up my property to my sister, it was generally understood that I meant wholly to relinquish my country; I was therefore careful not to be seen, especially at court, so shortly after the termination of that affair. This was the cause of my sudden departure. Many will think these rapid movements extremely odd; but their astonishment will cease when they are made acquainted with the cause of my conduct. Six years had elapsed since I resided at Turin; and as it appeared to me that it was impossible to enjoy in that city either secu-

rity, tranquillity, or freedom, I was of opinion that I ought not, had I even been so inclined, to remain in it any longer.

From Masino I returned to Milan, where I passed the month of July. Here I frequently saw the original author of Mattino, the real precursor of Italian satire. From this celebrated author I endeavoured to learn in what the principal defect of my tragic style consisted. I inquired with an anxious desire to be instructed, and listened to him with the utmost attention. With the greatest readiness Parini bestowed on me much excellent advice, respecting different points, which, however, taken together, could not constitute what is termed style, but only some of its parts. Neither Parini, Cesarotti, nor any other of the learned men whom I interrogated on this subject, during my journey through Lombardy, with all the ardour and humility of a novice, were however able to point out to me what constituted the real defects of my style, defects which I was not myself, at the time, sensible of, and which I only saw and corrected after several years of la-

bour and uncertainty. On the whole, however, my tragedies had more success beyond the Appennines than in Tuscany: my style was even censured with less animosity and more judgment. The same circumstance occurred at Rome and Naples, among the few readers which I found in these cities. It seems then an ancient privilege of Tuscany alone to encourage, in this manner, Italian writers who compose only academic discourses, destitute of sense and humour.

CHAPTER XI.

I send six other Tragedies to the Press—Different Critiques on the four first.—Reply to a Letter from Calsabigi.

At the commencement of August I left Milan, and set out for Tuscany. I took a new route, which led from Modena to Pistoja. It was when travelling along this magnificent and picturesque road that I first attempted the composition of some epigrams. I was fully persuaded that if we had no pointed, severe, or well-turned epigrams, it could not be attributable to the genius of the Italian language, which is the most vigorous and concise of any with which I am acquainted. The Florentine pedants, by whom I was surrounded as I approached Pistoja, furnished an ample subject on which to exercise my new art. I remained

a few days at Florence, and assuming the harmlessness of a lamb, I visited several of them, in order either to gain instruction, or learn to laugh. I profited very little in the first respect, but in the second I found ample field for merriment. These gentlemen *modestly* gave me to understand, or to speak more properly, made me clearly perceive, that if I had put my manuscripts into their hands to correct before sending them to the press, it would have greatly enhanced their value. They entertained me with a thousand impertinances of a similar kind. I inquired with the greatest patience, if I had committed any offence against the purity and analogy of words, or against grammar, which ought always to be held sacred; or, in short, if I had introduced any solecisms or barbarisms into my composition, or had deviated from the rules to be observed in the structure of the verse. But so ignorant were they of the art they professed to criticise, that they could not point out to me the precise places where those faults were to be found; yet they persevered in affirming that many grammatical errors

might doubtless be detected. They contented themselves, however, with censuring my employment of what they denominated obsolete terms, and with the harshness, obscurity, and too great conciseness of my style. Enriched in this manner with such rare knowledge, instructed and enlightened by these *consummate masters of the tragic art*, I returned to Sienna. There I resolved, in order to assuage the grief which constantly haunted my steps, to continue the printing of my tragedies under my own inspection. In giving an account to my friend of the instruction I had derived from our different Italian oracles, and especially those of Florence and Pisa, we amused ourselves at their expence, while furnishing them with the means of retaliating by the publication of my other tragedies. In the mean time I urged forward the printing with so much ardour, though rather too precipitately, that before the end of September, that is, in less than two months, six new tragedies were ready for publication, which, joined to the first four, formed the whole of this first edition.

I was now destined to make new discoveries from hard-earned experience.

A few months before I had learned to know journals and journalists; and I had now to become acquainted with censors, revisers, compositors, pressmen, &c. The two last can easily be managed by the influence of money, but the revisers and censors, being above receiving a gift, it is necessary to visit them, to comply with their humours, to flatter, and even to supplicate them, all which I found insupportable. My friend Gandellini had undertaken this office, when my first volume was at the press, and he would in like manner have done so, during the printing of the two others, had I not myself wished to become acquainted with different scenes of life. I was very well pleased to know the frowns of a censor, and the gravity of a reviser. At any other time I would have laughed at the figure they displayed, but my heart was then overwhelmed with the most poignant sorrow.

I corrected then, for the first time, my own proofs, but my mind was so oppressed,

and so incapable of steady application, that I could not attend so accurately to the style of my tragedies as I would otherwise have done, and as I did several years afterwards, when they were reprinted at Paris. In this respect proofs are extremely useful, since in reading isolated portions separate from the rest of the work, the eye more readily discovers those spots which may at first have been overlooked; the obscurities, ill-constructed verses, and in short all the little faults, which, taken together, constitute a bad style. These six tragedies, even in the eyes of my detractors, appeared superior to the four former. At that period I did not wish to add to them the four others which still remained in manuscript, particularly the Conspiracy of Pazzi, and Mary Stuart, as it would then only have augmented my embarrassment and that of the individual who interested me more than even myself. The labour of correcting the proofs, which were sent to me very rapidly, and to which I dedicated my attention immediately after dinner, brought on a fit of the gout, which confined me for

fifteen days, during which I suffered the greatest torment, though I obstinately resisted taking my bed. I had the year before experienced a slight attack of this disease during my stay at Rome, and this second fit convinced me that I should never be long free from it during the latter part of my life. The immoderate sorrow I had experienced, joined to incessant and severe mental exertion, were doubtless the two causes which had produced this malady, which was always however successfully combatted by my extreme sobriety; so that at this period, 1783, the paroxysms of my gout, to which I have carefully attended, have never been either very severe or frequent.

When the impression of my tragedies was nearly concluded, I received from Naples a long letter by Calsabigi, respecting the four already published, and which was filled with quotations in all the different languages. It was the only criticism on my writings which appeared to emenate from a just and enlightened spirit, and I immediately set about a reply. In this answer I found an opportunity of unfolding my rea-

sons, of analysing the motives and method which had produced the faults I committed, and of showing at the same time to all the ignorant declaimers against my works, that it was necessary either to criticize with taste and discernment or remain silent. I was so interested in my subject, that this reply cost me very little labour. This production was prefixed as a preface to a future edition of my tragedies, though I did not wish it should appear along with that which was then printing at Sienna.

As this was only a simple trial, I was not inclined to justify myself, but to suffer my detractors to level as many darts at me as they pleased. I besides flattered myself that they would rather increase than tarnish my fame, as nothing adds more to the celebrity of an author than absurd and injudicious criticisms. I should not here have noticed this little trait of pride, had I not pledged myself at the commencement of this work to conceal nothing which passed in my mind, nor to give different reasons for my actions from those by which I was really influenced. The printing

being finished, I published the second volume in the beginning of October, and reserved the third in order to excite a new war among the critics, as soon as that produced by the present should have terminated.

As, however, the object of all my wishes, the re-union with the mistress of my affections, could not be realised this summer, I resolved to take a journey to France and England, in order if possible to assuage the sorrow and agitation I experienced at this disappointment. I had neither the wish nor curiosity again to re-visit these countries, with which I was so much disgusted during my second travels; but travelling was become necessary in order to alleviate my sufferings. I determined to purchase as many English horses as possible. This rage for horses, which revived occasionally, was so strong that my noble coursers frequently even overcame my taste for books and poetry. At this moment, when my heart was lacerated with sorrow, the muses maintained but little sway over my mind. The *poet* was transformed into a

horse-dealer. I set out for London, with my imagination filled with noble heads, fine necks, and well-turned buttocks, wholly indifferent whether my tragedies appeared or not. I wasted more than eight months in these trifles, without pursuing any literary occupation whatever, scarcely ever opening a book. The only ones on which I sometimes cast my eyes were my four favourite poets, which I alternately put in my pocket, and which were become my inseparable companions during my long journeys. All my thoughts dwelt on the mistress of my heart, and my grief at our separation was from time to time depicted in melancholy verses.

CHAPTER XII.

Third Voyage to England, for the sole Purpose of purchasing Horses.

I LEFT Sienna in the month of October, and set out for Genoa by the way of Pisa and Lerici. My friend Gandellini accompanied me to the former city, where we remained only a few days. From thence he returned to Tuscany, and I embarked for Antibes. This passage, which was performed in the short space of eighteen hours, was not wholly unattended with danger. We spent the night in terror: the felucca was extremely small, and my carriage had nearly destroyed its equilibrium: the sea ran high, and the wind was violent; in short, we were in great jeopardy. On disembarking, I set out for Aix, where I

made only a very short stay. On reaching Avignon, I visited the enchanting shades of Valclusa. The scalding tears which proceeded from my oppressed heart mingled with the waters of the Sorgue. On going and returning from Valclusa to Avignon, I composed four sonnets. This day proved one of the happiest, yet most miserable of my life. On leaving Avignon, I determined to visit the celebrated Chartreuse of Grenoble; and, still absorbed in the deepest melancholy, I reached Paris.

The sight of this immense city produced on my mind the same mixed sensation of anger and sorrow, as on my two former visits. Though I had letters of introduction to most of their literati, I remained in that capital only one month, which appeared to me an age. In the month of December, I prepared to pass over to England. The men of letters in France are for the most part strangers to Italian literature: it was impossible for me to take any part in their conversation; I nevertheless was irritated at my own folly, in having again subjected myself to the necessity of speaking and

listening to their nasal and *anti-tuscan* jargon; I therefore hastened my departure. Balloons were at this period the rage of the day. I witnessed two of the first and most successful ærostatic experiments. In the former of these, the balloon was filled with rarified air, and in the latter with inflammable gas; in each of them were seated two individuals. What a majestic and noble spectacle, more fitted for *poetry* than history! a discovery that may be termed *sublime*, when the means have been found of rendering it useful.

No sooner had I reached London, than I purchased first a race horse, then two, and shortly after one for the saddle, and at last six carriage horses. I had the misfortune to lose several colts successively; but as one died I purchased two. This inordinate desire, which had lain dormant for six years, stimulated by privations, was again re-kindled. In the pursuit of this favourite amusement I disregarded every obstacle, and when only five horses remained out of the ten I had purchased, I made up the number to fourteen; in relation to my having written

fourteen tragedies, though I had resolved only to finish twelve. The latter exhausted my mind—the former drained my purse. But the pleasure which my horses afforded me restored my health, and inspired me with courage to labour at other tragedies, and other works. I did not therefore regret the vast sums which I had expended, since I thus procured to myself the restoration of my health and vivacity. I was much better at expending than adapting my expenditure to my income. During the first three years after the donation of my property, I had lived in the most sordid manner, and during the three latter with decent moderation and frugality. By this means I found myself in possession of a large sum of money from the accumulation of my yearly income in France, which had remained untouched during this period. I consumed a great part of these savings in purchasing, and in transporting my *fourteen friends* to Italy, and their maintenance for five years absorbed the remainder. I sustained no farther losses among these, my favourites, after removing them from their

native isle; and so much had I become attached to these animals, that I could not resolve to part with a single one. Surrounded by my horses, my mind dejected by the absence of her whose presence alone stimulated me to every great and noble action, I avoided society, and sought acquaintance with no one. I either remained with my horses, or in scribbling letter upon letter. In this manner I spent four months in London, and thought no more of my tragedies than if they had never been written. Sometimes, indeed, the whimsical relation which existed between their number and that of my horses presented itself to my imagination, and I said to myself with a smile: "Thou hast gained a horse by each tragedy," in allusion to the flagellation inflicted by our Italian pedagogues on boys who had neglected their exercises in composition.*

* In Italy, when any of the boys belonging to a class commits a fault, the schoolmaster orders him to be hoisted on the back of one of his comrades; and in this posture inflicts on him a certain number of strokes with a cane, which is termed *giving him a horse.*

I thus vegetated for several months in a state of the most complete idleness, neglecting even my favourite poets. My inventive faculties became so benumbed, that during my abode in London, I only composed one sonnet, and two on setting out from that capital. Accompanied by my numerous caravan, I arrived at Calais, whence I went to Paris; and afterwards, proceeding by the way of Lyons and Turin, repaired to Sienna. This journey, which I have described in three lines, was extremely difficult from the great number of my horses. I every day, and indeed at every step, experienced a degree of vexation and embarrassment, which embittered the pleasure I should otherwise have derived from my cavalry. One coughed, another would not eat, a third fell lame, a fourth became affected with the farcy. It was a continued series of disasters, in which I was the greatest sufferer. In the passage from Dover they were obliged to be placed like a flock of sheep, by way of ballast in the hold of the vessel. Here they were so much exhausted, and became so dirty, that

their bright bay colour could not be distinguished. On arriving at Calais, before disembarking, I had the mortification to see their backs serve as a bridge to the heavy sailors, who passed over them, not as if they had been living animals, but merely a continuation of planks. In short, they were obliged to be slung over the sides of the vessel into the sea, as the tide would not permit us to land till the following morning; so that if we had not brought them ashore in this manner, they must have remained during the night in a very uncomfortable position. In fact, it is impossible to describe what I suffered; nevertheless my anxiety and foresight were so great; the cares which I bestowed on them, which I delegated to no one, were so unremmitting and assiduous, that notwithstanding every danger, I succeeded in bringing them ashore in safety.

I confess that in my attachment for horses I was actuated by a vanity no less foolish than extravagant. When at Amiens, Paris, Lyons, Turin, and elsewhere, the connoisseurs admired my fine horses, I felt as

proud as if they had been the offspring of my own hands. Of all the enterprizes which I ever undertook, the most difficult and *heroic* was my passage over the Alps, between Lansleberg and Novalaise. I found the greatest difficulty in securing these unwieldy and bulky animals from the danger they ran of being hurled headlong from the frightful precipices we had to scale during this perilous journey. The reader will I hope pardon me these details, and the pleasure which I derive from describing my efforts and success. Those to whom they may prove displeasing may pass them over, while those who read them may judge whether I were not better able to conduct the march of my fourteen horses, in these *straits of Thermopylæ*, than the five acts of a tragedy.

My horses, thanks to their youth, my paternal cares, and the little fatigue they underwent, were so full of health and spirits, that it was extremely difficult to conduct them over this mountainous district: I therefore took with me to Lansleberg as many men as I had horses; so that each

horse had its conductor, who held him close by the bridle. They were fastened together by the tail, and between every three I had placed one of the guides, who on a mule guarded the three which preceded him. In the midst of this cavalcade was the farrier of Lansleberg, provided with nails and shoes, in order to lend prompt assistance to those which might be unshod, and which was the more to be dreaded from the huge stones over which they had to tread, whilst I myself, in quality of commander in chief of the expedition, rode in the rear mounted on Frontin, the smallest and nimblest of my horses. By my side rode two agile and nimble-footed aide-du-camps, whom I dispatched to the centre, to the front, and to the rear, with my orders. In this manner we arrived without accident at the summit of Mount Cenis: when we had to descend on the Italian side, I dreaded the mettle of my horses, from the rapidity of their descent. I changed my situation, and alighting from my horse, walked in the front with the view of retarding the velocity of their march. I placed at the head of this phalanx the

heaviest and least spirited of my animals: my aide-du-camps ran before and behind, in order to keep them always at a proper distance from each other: yet, notwithstanding all these attentions, several had their feet unshod; but the dispositions that had been made were so skilful, that the farrier quickly lent the necessary assistance, and they arrived at Novalaise in very good condition, and with only one lamed among the whole troop. These trifling details will prove of importance to those who may have to transport horses over the Alps, or other mountainous regions. As for me, after having so ably directed this passage, I regarded myself as scarcely inferior to Hannibal, who only passed a little more to the south with his slaves and his elephants. If his enterprise was performed at the expence of much vinegar, mine likewise cost me much wine; for my whole suite, consisting of guides, farriers, horse-dealers, and aide-du-camps, drank at pleasure.

With my head filled with follies of every kind, among which my horses alone kept

me alive, and void of every useful idea, I arrived, seven years after my expatriation, at Turin, where I remained nearly three weeks. I began to weary of my horses: I allowed them seven or eight days repose, and then sent them forward to Tuscany, where I intended to join them. I also wished to recover myself from fatigues so unfavourable to a tragic poet of thirty-five. Notwithstanding all these inconveniences, the exercise, and the total cessation of all species of study, proved of infinite service to my health. I found myself invigorated in body, but unfortunately my intellects also partook too much of the child. My coursers had re-conducted me with rapid strides to my primitive ignorance: my mind was so rusted for want of exertion, that I believed it incapable either of invention or composition.

CHAPTER XIII.

Short Abode at Turin.—I attend the Representation of Virginia.

During my stay at Turin I enjoyed some pleasure, but I also experienced much sorrow. It is unquestionably delightful, after a long separation, to behold the friends of our early years, the places where we have gambolled during childhood, the trees, even the stones, in short, all these objects from which sprung our first ideas, and our first attachments. But how mortifying to me, on meeting with the companions of my youth, to perceive that they avoided me, or when that was impossible, only saluted me with the most frigid air, or turned aside from me with disdain! Far from having done them any injury, I had always treated them with distinguished friendship

and cordiality. This conduct hurt me greatly, and would have done still more so, had I not been informed by those who still felt some kindness towards me, that I was thus treated by some because I had written tragedies, by others because I had travelled much, and by a third class because I had returned to my country with such a number of horses; and a thousand similar trifling reasons. These trifles will doubtless be excused by any one acquainted with human nature, since he must have impartially examined his own heart; nevertheless, they ought as much as possible to be avoided; by exiling ourselves for ever from the country where we were born, if we do not intend to conform to the manners of others, or cannot make them acquiesce in the propriety of our's, especially if that country be small, and the inhabitants indolent, or if we have had the misfortune involuntarily to wound their self-love, by endeavouring to soar above them in any respect whatever.

While at Turin, I was compelled to undergo a still more severe mortification, from the indispensible necessity of being presented

to his majesty. He could not regard me with a favourable eye, since I had tacitly contemned him in quitting his states: nevertheless, the customs of the country, and the rank which I held, obliged me to appear at court, if I wished to avoid the imputation of insolence and folly. My brother-in-law, who was first lord in waiting, inquired with great anxiety whether or not I meant to be presented. I immediately tranquillized him on this subject, assuring him that such was my intention. He named an early day for this ceremony, to which I made no objection; and the following morning I waited on the minister. My brother-in-law had informed me that the government was very amicably disposed towards me; that I should be graciously received; and that some idea had even been entertained of offering me an employment. This favour, which was wholly unexpected, and which I certainly did not merit, made me tremble; but the information was of use to me in this respect, as it prepared me in what manner to act: I therefore informed the minister, that in

passing through Turin, I conceived it my duty to wait on him, and entreat that he would present me, with the sole intention of offering my respectful homage to his majesty. The minister received me in the most flattering manner: at first he only spoke vaguely on the subject, but at length openly declared that the king would derive much satisfaction from seeing me settled in my native country; that his majesty was willing to accept of my services; and many other speeches of a similar import. I immediately cut him short, by replying that I intended returning to Tuscany, to pursue my studies, and to superintend the printing of my works; that I was in my thirty-fifth year, an age when our habits are fixed; that I had hitherto devoted my time to literary occupations, and that it was my intention to spend the remainder of my days in similar pursuits. He replied that the profession of an author was highly respectable, but that there were certainly situations much more important and honourable which I was worthy to fill. I politely thanked him, but persisted in declining

them. I had even the moderation and generosity not to mortify this worthy man, as he certainly deserved, by making him understand what I thought of diplomatic employments, which were certainly much less important to me than my dramatic works, or even those of others: but it is impossible to enlighten such people; they neither can nor will be convinced. As for me, who am naturally disinclined to disputation, especially with those whose ideas are in every respect dissimilar to my own, I contented myself in the present case with positively declining every situation. The minister had most probably informed his majesty of my refusal, for on the following day, when I was presented, he said not a word on the subject, but received me with that courteous affability so natural to him. It was Victor Amadis III. son of Charles Emanuel, in whose reign I was born. Though very far from being partial to kings in general, and particularly to despots, I must here confess that this family, taken on the whole, deserve some praise, especially when compared with those who

at present occupy the thrones of Europe. Hence I experienced no aversion in particular towards this dynasty. The reigning monarch, as well as his predecessor, were well-meaning men: the conduct of Amadis was praise-worthy and exemplary; in one word, he did more good than evil to his country. Nevertheless, when it is recollected that the good and evil which kings perform depend on their own will alone, we must naturally shudder, and if possible fly from their power. It was in this manner I acted on this occasion. After having remained at Turin a sufficient length of time to see my relations and acquaintances, after having passed a short time as usefully as agreeably with my inestimable friend the Abbé Caluso, who partly restored me to myself, and drew me from the stables, I left that city.

During my abode at Turin, I happened, contrary to my inclinations, to be present at the representation of my Virginia. It was brought out at the same theatre, where, nine years before, my Cleopatra had been acted, and by nearly as able performers. One

of my academic friends had prepared every thing for this representation before my arrival, which was wholly unexpected. He, however, requested me to assign to the actors their different parts, as I formerly had done for Cleopatra; but my powers, and above all my pride, being augmented, I refused to lend my aid. I was well acquainted with the audience, and especially with the actors, and I wished not to be in any way implicated in their incapacity, which was evident to me even before having heard them. I knew that it was necessary, to commence with an impossibility; that of making them speak and pronounce the Italian, instead of the Venetian; to make it appear as if the parts were uttered by them and not by the prompter; in short, that it would be necessary to make them understand (to feel would be requiring too much) the sensations they ought to excite in the minds of their auditors. Such being my conviction, it will be obvious that my refusal was not unreasonable, and my pride not misplaced. I insisted that my friend should act as he thought proper, only pro-

mising to attend the performance, from which I became convinced that the praise or censure of an Italian audience should be regarded with equal indifference. Virginia obtained the same reception as Cleopatra, and like it was given out for the following evening; but, as it may readily be supposed, I was not present at this second representation.

From that moment the illusions of fame, which I had fondly cherished, began gradually to dissipate: nevertheless, I did not relinquish my design of prosecuting two or three different kinds of new works. I resolved to bestow on them all the care and attention of which I was capable, that in my dying hour I might enjoy the consolation of having done every thing in my power to secure my own reputation, as well as to improve the dramatic art. With respect to the judgment of my cotemporaries, in the present state of Italian criticism, I am equally indifferent to their praise or censure. That praise which is founded on no just principles, does not indeed deserve the name, and can never be coveted by any

author of discernment. Neither can I term censure that indiscriminate desire to discover faults, without pointing out the means of remedying them in future.

During the representation of Virginia, I suffered far more intense anxiety than when I had formerly witnessed the first performance of my Cleopatra: and my feelings on these two occasions proceeded from very different causes. By those who are enthusiastically attached to the dramatic art, these feelings will readily be understood, without any farther attempt on my part to explain them, whereas on the contrary no elucidation could render them comprehensible to those who have never felt similar emotions.

On leaving Turin, I spent three days at Asti with my worthy and respectable mother: on separating we shed a torrent of tears—both felt a melancholy foreboding that this would be our last meeting. I will not affirm that I felt for her all the filial affection she merited. I had quitted her at nine years of age, and from that early period had never again seen her except for

a few hours on a transient visit: but my esteem, my gratitude, and veneration for this excellent parent have ever been, and will always continue unbounded. May heaven grant her a long series of years, since she so worthily employs them in assuaging the sorrows of those around her! She loved me beyond expression, and much more than I deserved. Thus, as the moment of separation drew nigh, I could not behold her violent grief without participating in it; and the remembrance of these afflicting moments will for ever remain indelibly engraven on my mind.

No sooner was I beyond the states of the Sardinian monarch, than it appeared to me as if I respired more freely, the remembrance of my natal yoke weighed so heavily on me, though I had already broken it. While I remained there, every time I was obliged to meet with those who had any influence in the government of the country, I regarded myself more as a slave than as a freeman. I oft recalled to mind the beautiful speech of Pompey, when he sought refuge in Egypt:—*He who enters the house*

of a tyrant becomes a slave if he be not so already. Hence the man, who either through indolence, or a love of pleasure, returns to the prison he had left, well deserves to meet with jailors, and be retained against his inclination.

On approaching Modena, the intelligence which I received respecting my fair friend, by turns filled me with grief and hope, and kept my mind in a state of the utmost uncertainty. The last news from Piaisance informed me that she was at length freed from the control of her husband, and had quitted Rome. This transported me with rapture, since Rome was the only city where I durst not visit her. On the other hand, Decency, with her leaden fetters, prevented me from following her. After innumerable difficulties and sacrifices, she had at last obtained permission from her brother-in-law and the Pope to visit the waters of Baden in Switzerland. Her health had been greatly injured by the grief to which her mind had been long a prey. In the month of June, 1784, she accordingly left Rome, and coasting along the shores of the

Adriatic, by Bologna, Mantua, and Trent, had taken the way of Tyrol, while I, quitting Turin by Plaisance, Modena, and Pistoja, returned to Sienna. The idea of being so near her, and yet that in a short time we should be again far distant from each other, enchanted and agonized me at the same time. I might have sent my carriage and domestics forward, taken post, and crossed the country to join her,—I should at least have beheld her! I desired, I feared, I hoped, I wished—I knew not what—Anxieties which can only be known to those who love as I loved. Duty at last obtained the victory: my anxiety for her reputation overbalanced every other consideration, and by turns irritated or dissolved in tears, I left the great road, and groaning under the weight of my dear bought victory, I arrived at Sienna, after ten months absence. Here I received from my friend Gandellini those consolations which were necessary to make me endure life, and again awaken hope in my woe-worn bosom.

CHAPTER XIV.

Journey to Alsace—I re-visit my fair Friend—Plan of three new Tragedies—Death of Gandellini.

My fourteen horses arrived a few days after me at Sienna, where they found a companion, which I had entrusted to the care of my friend. This was my beautiful fawn coloured horse, *Fidele*, on which my fair mistress had frequently rode when I was at Rome; and which on that account I held in greater estimation than all his companions. The indolent habits I had contracted by my fondness for these animals, together with the profound melancholy with which I was oppressed, altogether unfitted me for my usual literary pursuits. Hence, during the five or six weeks I re-

mained at Sienna, I composed very little. I finished however the third canto of my small poem, to the completion of which only a few stanzas were wanting. I then entered upon the fourth and last canto. Though this work had been composed in detached portions, at different times, and at very distant intervals, and without any written plan, yet the idea of it was indelibly imprinted on my mind.

I endeavoured as much as possible to prevent this work swelling to too great a magnitude, which it must necessarily have done, had I introduced those episodes with which I might have embellished it. But though I perceived that its chief merit must consist in brevity, I yet endeavoured to render it original and piquant. According to my original plan, it was to have been comprised in three cantos, but finding that the review of the coumellori occupied nearly an entire canto, I was induced to superadd a fourth. I am not certain whether these various interruptions might not influence the whole poem, and give to it the appearance of patch-work.

While busily engaged in composing the fourth canto, I sedulously kept up a correspondence with my inestimable friend. The tenor of her letters gradually augmented my hopes of being again permitted to revisit her. This desire at length so fully occupied my mind, and became so violent, that I could no longer resist it. I imparted my intentions to no one but Gandellini, and pretending to take a journey to Venice, I set out on the fourth of August for Germany; a day, alas! the bitter recollection of which will never be blotted from my memory. While proceeding, intoxicated with joy, to meet the dear object of my affections, I knew not this was the last time I should ever embrace my highly valued friend; I little thought when I bade him adieu only for six weeks that it was to be an eternal one. I never recollect this heart-rending event without shedding many a bitter tear.

Having once again commenced traveller, I proceeded by the delightful and classical route of Pistoja to Modena. After passing rapidly through Mantua, Trent, and Inspruck,

I pursued my way through Suabia to Colmar in upper Alsace, on the left bank of the Rhine. Near this city I at length met her whom I so anxiously sought, and from whom I had been separated sixteen months. Though I had performed this journey in twelve days, and road post, my progress did not keep pace with my wishes. During this journey, a poetic mania seized me, which involuntarily impelled me to compose three or four sonnets daily. I pursued with transport the tract which my fair friend had taken two months before. With a heart overflowing with joy, I indulged myself in writing burlesque poetry. Of this kind was an epistle to Gandellini, in which I detailed the method it behooved him to pursue in the care of my *dearly beloved* horses. The rage for horses constituted, as I have already said, my third passion; I should blush if I had termed it the second: it is fit that the muses should precede Pegasus.

This somewhat tedious epistle, which I afterwards printed among other poetical effusions, constituted my first and almost only attempt at burlesque poetry. Though

very far from excelling in this species of composition, I yet flattered myself that I was no stranger to its distinguishing characteristics. This, however, was not sufficient to produce excellence; I did the best in my power.

It was on the 16th of August that I arrived at the house of my fair friend, with whom I spent two months, which flew swiftly away. When blessed with her society I found myself again restored to life, and become a new man. Fifteen days had scarcely elapsed, when I began again to compose tragedies, to which I had not devoted myself for the two last years. On finishing Saul, I had determined to quit the buskin, and never more to resume it. I felt myself now, however, involuntarily constrained to write, all at once, three other tragedies; Agis, Sophonisba, and Myrrha. The idea of the two former had often presented itself to my mind, but I had hitherto always repelled it. At length it took such possession of my imagination, that I proceeded to sketch these tragedies, yet I trusted that I should assume sufficient resolution

not to develope them. I had never thought of Myrrha; a subject, which, as being founded on incestuous passion, I conceived ill adapted for tragedy. I had read in Ovid's Metamorphoses the animated and sublime address of Myrrha to her nurse. It had melted me into tears, and suddenly inspired me with the idea of a tragedy. I conceived the subject might be rendered extremely original and interesting, if the author handled it in such a manner as gradually to unfold to his auditors the dreadful and conflicting tumults which overwhelmed the pure but impassioned soul of Myrrha, who was much more unfortunate than culpable; without daring to avow her execrable passion to herself, much less to others. In short, I perceived that it was necessary to display, by action alone, what is related in Ovid, and that the heroine must execute her purpose without divulging it. I soon also became convinced that I should have much difficulty to encounter in preserving, through five acts, the terrible fluctuation of Myrrha's soul, so as to give interest to the piece, without the introduction of subordi-

nate incidents. This difficulty, which I felt not only during the progress, but even after the termination of the work, served, however, rather to stimulate than repress my ardour in its execution. I must leave to others to decide how far I have succeeded in overcoming it.

These three new productions served to re-kindle in my mind the love of glory, which I no longer thirsted after, but with the view of sharing it with her who was dearer to me than life. Thus occupied, did I enjoy in the society of my friend, during one month, a happiness only alloyed by the sorrowful anticipation of our approaching separation. As if however this inevitable misfortune was not of itself sufficient to overwhelm me, cruel fate decreed that I should pay dearly for the fleeting happiness I had enjoyed. By letters received from Sienna, in the course of a single week I learned the afflicting intelligence first of the death of Gandellini's younger brother, and afterwards of his own. Had I not been at the house of my fair friend, on receiving this sudden and unexpected shock, I know

not what effects might have resulted from the excess of my sorrow. Nothing tends so powerfully to mitigate our grief, on such melancholy occasions, as the society of a beloved friend, who participates in our afflictions. My fair friend herself knew Gandellini, and was much attached to him. On the preceding year, after having accompanied me to Genoa, he had returned to Tuscany, and afterwards visited Rome, for the express purpose of being introduced to her acquaintance. He remained there several months, during which he seldom quitted her even for a single day, often going in company with her to view the prodigies of the fine arts, which she was never tired of contemplating, and the merits of which she knew so well how to appreciate. She did not therefore mourn his loss on my account alone, but also on her own, knowing by experience the value of the friend whom we had lost. This misfortune interrupted our happiness during the short period we remained together, and rendered our separation still more afflicting. The dreadful day at length arrived, and it behooved us

to submit to fate. Gloomy despondency took possession of my mind, on finding myself not only separated from the woman I adored, and without knowing for how long a time, but also deprived, alas, for ever! of an inestimable friend. Every step I advanced, during this same route, which lately charmed my sorrow, now only served to redouble it. Oppressed and weighed down by grief, except composing a few verses, I did nothing but weep during my way to Sienna, which I reached in the beginning of November. The relatives of my friend, between whom and me a reciprocal attachment subsisted on his account, contributed also greatly to augment my sorrow, by their too great readiness to satisfy my anxiety to be informed of every particular respecting that mournful event. I trembled, and though eager to know all the circumstances, I yet avoided to hear them. I returned no more, as may be readily imagined, to this abode of mourning, and never since have I had the resolution to re-enter it. On returning from Milan, the preceding year, my friend had caused a cheerful, yet retired apartment,

to be fitted up for my reception in his house, where we lived like brothers.

To stay at Sienna I found altogether insupportable without my friend. Wishing to assuage my grief for his loss, without ceasing to cherish his remembrance, I incessantly roamed about in search of new objects. I visited Pisa in the month of November, being determined to spend the winter in that city. I anxiously waited till I should be again restored to myself, since being bereaved of every thing the heart holds dear, I could no longer consider myself as numbered among the living.

CHAPTER XV.

Stay at Pisa.—I write the Eulogy of Trajan and some other Works.

In the mean time, my fair friend, having crossed the Alps, had also entered Italy by the way of Turin. She proceeded to Genoa, and from thence to Bologna, which she reached in December, and where, under the pretext of the advanced state of the season, she proposed to pass the winter. In this way, without quitting the Papal territories, she excused herself from returning to her former prison at Rome. Thus, then, while I continued at Pisa, and she at Bologna, did we remain separated, though so near to each other, with the Appennines only intervening betwixt us. From this I experienced much consolation and suffering at the same time. Though I kept

up a regular correspondence with this amiable woman, I never attempted in any way to visit her. I dreaded the tittle tattle of the small Italian cities, where those who are at all removed above the vulgar are particularly exposed to the observations of the idle and malicious. I spent then the whole winter at Pisa, without experiencing any other consolation than that which I derived from frequently receiving the letters of my inestimable friend. My time was wholly occupied in attending to my horses, for I never opened a book of any kind, not even those which had been the inseparable companions of my travels. Oppressed by lassitude at those hours when I could neither mount my horse nor play the coachman, I endeavoured to take up a book, and especially in bed on awakening in the morning. In this way I read through the letters of the younger Pliny, in which I was equally delighted with the elegance of the style, as with the knowledge they displayed of the manners of the Romans. I discovered also thoughout the work indications of an upright mind, and of a cha-

racter at once amiable and exalted. I next entered on the perusal of the Panegyric of Trajan, a work which I knew only by name. After reading a few pages, finding no internal evidence of its having been written by the author of the letters, and still less by the supposed friend of Tacitus, I experienced an emotion of indignation, and immediately threw the book aside, and seating myself, I seized my pen in a rage, exclaiming in an audible voice, "My dear Pliny, hadst thou been in reality the friend, the rival and admirer of Tacitus, thus would'st thou have spoken of Trajan;" and without thought or reflection, I immediately wrote down, like a fool, whatever flowed from my pen, till I had filled four large pages of paper in my usual small hand. At length, wearied, and recovering from my paroxysm of enthusiasm, I laid down my pen, and during the remainder of the day thought no more on the subject. On the following morning I again took up my Pliny, with the view of continuing the perusal of his panegyric, but after reading a few pages, I threw it aside as before, and

again taking up what I had written, felt myself highly pleased with it, and more inspired than on the preceding day. I arranged and distributed my subject as well as I could, and continued without intermission to write every morning successively as much as was admissible with the weakness of my sight, which usually became cloudy after two hours incessant labour. I reflected, however, on it during the rest of the day, as I generally do when I find myself seized with the mania of writing on any particular subject. It occupied me five mornings, from the 13th to the 17th of March, and I made very few alterations in the original manuscript while it was at press.

This work so completely rivetted my attention as greatly to mitigate my mental sufferings. I then became convinced by experience, that in order to enable me to bear up against, and finally to overcome the grief with which my heart was oppressed, it was necessary to rouse and occupy myself by some literary pursuit: but as my mind never proved subservient to the

control of my will, I could not have combined two ideas together, however much I might have been disposed to write a panegyric on Trajan, till I felt the necessary impulse. Thus, in order to occupy my mind, and beguile my sorrow, I sought the means of doing violence to my inclinations, by entering on some work which required patience. Again taking up Sallust, which I had translated ten years before, with a view to exercise my mind, I re-copied it with the Latin text before me, and seriously set about correcting it, in the hope of rendering it more perfect. As my mind, however, was incapable of regular and steady application, I made little progress in this undertaking. I perceived, on the contrary, that during the delirium of a pre-occupied and wounded mind, it is much easier to conceive and imagine a short and impassioned work, than to sit down calmly to polish what we have already composed. While the mind is engaged in the work of correction, it readily wanders to other subjects; but invention is like a fever, during the access of which the mind is so com-

pletely abstracted as to be insensible to every thing else. Quitting Sallust, therefore, and putting him aside, to be resumed at a more auspicious period, I continued my Essays on Government and Literature, the plan of which I had sketched some years before at Florence. I wrote the whole of the first book, and two or three chapters of the second.

When I published the preceding summer, on my return from England, the third volume of my tragedies, I transmitted copies of it to several of the learned men of Italy, and among others to Cesarotti, whom I entreated at the same time to give me his opinion respecting the style, composition, and conduct of the work. In consequence of this request, I received from him in April a letter, interspersed with critical remarks on the tragedies in question. I wrote him a short answer in return, subjoining a few notes to his observations, which might easily have been confuted, and entreating him to point out, or to furnish me himself, with some model for dramatic composition. I must here observe,

that Cesarotti, who has conceived and executed with so much ability his sublime version of Ossian, when I requested him, two years before, to point out to me some model for colloquial blank verse, mentioned his own translations from the French, such as the Semiramis and Mahomet of Voltaire, which had been published long before, and virtually proposed them as suited to answer my purpose. As these translations are in the hands of every one, it would be superfluous here to add any reflections on this subject. Every one may compare his tragic works with mine, and form their own judgment: they may also compare the epic poetry of this author in his Ossian, and judge whether it bears characteristic marks of a similar origin. This fact will serve, however, to demonstrate what a miserable being is man, and especially an author—we have hands, a pallet, and pencil, to delineate others, but possess not a mirror to recognise ourselves.

A journalist at Pisa, who at a subsequent period wished to introduce into his review an account of my third volume of tragedies,

found it a much more easy and shorter method to transcribe the whole of Cesarotti's letter with my notes than to enter into a critical analysis of the work itself.

I remained at Pisa till the end of August, 1785, and during this period occupied myself in correcting and making such alterations in my ten printed tragedies as I then deemed necessary. But so much had my opinion altered in this respect, when I set about printing them at Paris, that these alterations swelled to four times their original magnitude.

In the month of May I witnessed at Pisa the *Battle of the Bridge*, a spectacle truly magnificent, and well calculated to excite in the minds of the beholders a lively recollection of the deeds of heroism and of ancient times. I also beheld another brilliant spectacle, though of a different kind, an illumination of the whole city, which is renewed every two years on Saint Zanieri's day.

The arrival of the King and Queen of Naples, on a visit to the Grand Duke Leopold, concurred this year with the celebra-

tion of these festivals. My pride was highly gratified during these public rejoicings, in consequence of my English horses having attracted general attention by their superior beauty and sprightliness. While, however, I foolishly and vainly exulted, I felt with the deepest sorrow, that in degenerate and sluggish Italy it is more easy to excite attention by fine horses than by dramatic compositions.

CHAPTER XVI.

Second Journey to Alsace, where I take up my Abode—the two Brutuses and Abel—I resume my Studies with Ardour.

My fair friend set out from Bologna in April, and took the road to Paris. She could not have made a more appropriate choice for a permanent residence than France, where she had numerous relatives and friends. She remained at Paris till the latter end of August, when she returned to Alsace, and occupied the same country-house where I visited her the preceding year. As for myself, I set out early in September, and transported with the most lively joy, crossed the Tyrolian Alps. The loss of my friend Gandellini, and the resolution my fair friend had taken to abandon Italy, deter-

mined me to quit it likewise. Though it was neither consonant to my wishes, nor consistent with propriety, that we should inhabit the same dwelling, I was yet solicitous to fix my residence as near to her as possible, or at least that the Alps should not intervene between us. I then put all my cavalry in motion, which safely arrived a month after me in Alsace, where I found every thing I possessed, excepting my books, of which I had left the greatest part behind me at Rome. The happiness which resulted from this second meeting continued only two months, as my friend found herself under the necessity of spending the winter at Paris. I attended her as far as Strasburg, where for the third time I was compelled to tear myself from her society. While she pursued her route, I returned to my former residence. Though deeply afflicted at our separation, yet my sorrow was not so extreme as that I had formerly experienced on similar occasions, because I was now nearer, and could visit her without obstacle or dread of injuring her. Besides, my mind anticipated the pleasure of her re-join-

ing me during the following summer. These hopes infused a balm into my wounded mind, and lightened it so effectually, that I once more resigned myself to the influence of the muses. During this winter, I performed more literary labour than I had ever done before within so short a period. The abstraction of my mind, uninterrupted by dissipation and chagrin, appeared at once to shorten and multiply the hours. Immediately on fixing myself in my retirement, I commenced the development of Agis, which I had previously sketched during the last December at Pisa; but having become disgusted with it, which never occurs to me when I originate an idea myself, I had thrown it aside. I now, however, happily finished it, as well as Sophonisba and Myrrha. In January, I likewise completed the second and third part of the Essays on Government and Literature. At this time I also devised and composed a dialogue to the ever cherished memory of my inestimable friend Gandellini, an homage which I severely reproached myself for having so long neglected. I moreover conceived and versified the lyric part of the

Melo-drama of Abel, a species of composition respecting which I shall speak hereafter, if health and opportunity be allowed me to execute what I propose. Having returned to the composition of verse, I finished my little poem without farther interruption. I besides revised and corrected the three other cantos, which, as before mentioned, I had written in detached portions during the last ten years, as may be inferred by a want of uniformity in the poem itself; a fault seldom discoverable among those with which my other productions abound.

I had scarcely finished this poem, when I received a letter from my fair friend, whose correspondence always gave me ineffable delight, in which she casually informed me that she had been lately present at the representation of the Brutus of Voltaire, which afforded her the highest gratification. I had myself seen it nearly ten years before, but I remembered little or nothing of the piece. I instantly felt myself inspired with a principle of emulation, and mentally ejaculated: "The Brutus! the Brutus of Voltaire! I will also compose

a Brutus, but instead of one I shall introduce two; and it will be seen whether I be not equally qualified to write on such a subject as a French plebeian, who during seventy years subscribed himself *Voltaire, Gentleman in ordinary to the king.*" I said not a word of my intention to any one, not even to my friend when replying to her letter, but instantly conceived my two Brutuses, such as they afterwards appeared. In this way was I led to break through the resolution I had taken not to write another tragedy, and from twelve they at length amounted to nineteen. Upon this Brutus, I renewed to Apollo the solemn oath which I had formerly taken, and which assuredly I shall never break, having for my guarantees the years which have rolled over my head, and so many things still left to execute, if health and opportunity are allowed me to perform them.

I passed five or six months in the country in a state of almost uninterrupted abstraction. It was my regular custom, as soon as I rose in the morning, to write long letters of five or six pages to my female friend; and after-

wards to pursue my literary avocations, which were for the most part protracted till two or three in the afternoon. Lastly, I went out and took an airing for two hours, either on horseback or in my carriage. As my mind was continually engaged, either in poetizing, thinking on the mistress of my affections, or on something else, I derived little advantage from these excursions, which, instead of amusing and relieving my mind, served still farther to fatigue and exhaust it. This mode of life brought on a violent attack of the gout, which, for the first time, confined me to my bed, and subjected me, during fifteen days, to the most excruciating sufferings. Thus were my literary pursuits, which I had resumed with so much ardour, disagreeably interrupted. Unquestionably, I should never have been able to support the recluse and studious life I led, had it not been for my horses, which induced me to take both air and exercise. Such occasional excursions, however, would have been insufficient to counteract the bad effects of such unremitting mental exertions; and if the gout had not afforded me a seasonable

respite, by forcing me to suspend my labours, I might probably have either become insane, or sunk through mere weakness, as both appetite and sleep had in a great measure forsaken me. Through the influence of repose, and a proper regimen, my health however became again restored about the month of May. Some circumstances having occurred to prevent my fair friend returning to the country, whose presence was my only worldly consolation, I fell into a profound melancholy, which so clouded my understanding, as to render me nearly incapable of engaging in any literary pursuit till towards the end of August, when, on the arrival of my friend, all my evils suddenly took to flight and disappeared. As soon as my health was re-established, I forgot the sorrows produced by her absence, which fortunately was the last. Resuming again my dramatic occupations, I pursued them with such ardour, that, about the middle of December, when we departed for Paris, I had finished the versification of Agis, Sophonisba, and Myrrha. I had also developed the two Brutuses, and written my first satire,

a species of composition in which I had not succeeded nine years before at Florence. At that period, being equally ignorant of language, and the construction of rhyme, I had abandoned the idea. The presence of my fair friend inspired me, however, with sufficient courage again to make the attempt, and it seemed to me if I could not attain the goal, I ought at least to enter the lists. Before departing for Paris, I also reviewed my other poetical works, the greatest part of which I had before polished; these I found had swelled to a considerable, perhaps too considerable a number.

CHAPTER XVII.

Journey to Paris—I make Arrangements with Didot for an Impression of my nineteen Tragedies—Return to Alsace—I fall dangerously ill in the Country, where my Friend Caluso had arrived in order to pass the Summer with us.

After an uninterrupted stay of fourteen months in Alsace, I set out, in company with my fair friend, for Paris. This country, which had always proved extremely disagreeable to me, as much on account of my own character, as the manners of the people, now appeared a perfect elysium, since I inhabited it with the mistress of my affections. Uncertain, however, whether my stay would be long, I left my favourite horses in Alsace, only carrying along with me my manuscripts and a few books. After

having breathed, for so long a period, the free air of the country, I found the noise and fœtor of this immense capital almost insupportable. The distance of my dwelling from that of my cherished friend, though agreed on between us, as well as various other circumstances, proved so extremely irksome to me, that I would instantly have quitted this modern Babylon, had I lived for myself alone. In a short time, however, I endeavoured to reconcile myself to sad necessity, and to derive all the advantage from my situation that was possible. None of the literati in Paris were however sufficiently acquainted with the Italian language to afford me any assistance with respect to style or versification. As to what related to the dramatic art in general, in which the French exclusively arrogate to themselves the first rank, as the principles on which their tragedies are composed were dissimilar from mine, I must have possessed a great deal of apathy to listen to their magisterial dogmas, which are in a great measure just, but which are never executed by those who promulgate

them. As I was not of a disputatious or wrangling turn of mind, I listened to every one, without, however, acquiescing in what was said, by which means I acquired the sublime art of being silent. This six months stay at Paris was of great use to me, at least in point of health.

About the middle of June we returned to our country residence in Alsace. I had already versified the elder Brutus, and by a laughable accident had been forced to re-sketch Sophonisba. When at Paris, I wished to read this tragedy to a French gentleman with whom I had been acquainted at Turin, and whom I regarded as an enlighted dramatic critic. It was to him I had submitted my Philippe in French prose, when he induced me to transpose the scene of the council from the fourth act, where it did not aid the progress of the action, to the third, where it now stands. In reading my Sophonisba to such a competent judge, I endeavoured to ascertain by his countenance, rather than by his words, the opinion he had formed of this piece. He listened to it without knitting his brows; but I,

who had read it before, was seized as I reached the middle of the second act with a depression of spirits, which augmented so much, that I could not finish the third. Impelled by an irresistible impulse, I took hold of the manuscript, and threw it into the fire before which we were seated. It seemed to me as if this fire had been purposely lighted to induce me to execute so severe and prompt an act of justice. My companion, astonished at such a strange and unexpected occurrence, for I had not uttered a syllable which could lead him to suspect my design, endeavoured to save my tragedy from the flames, but grasping the tongs, in my blind rage I pushed poor Sophonisba between the two or three faggots of wood which burnt in the grate, so that it was impossible to rescue it. I quitted not my instrument till I was satisfied the whole was consumed. This paroxysm of frenzy was similar to that I experienced when I assaulted my poor Elias at Madrid. I blushed not, however, so much on the present occasion, and on the whole it was followed with rather beneficial conse-

quences. It confirmed the opinion I had before entertained respecting the subject of this tragedy: it is truly shocking, exhibiting at once a false tragic character, which it is impossible to preserve throughout. I resolved to think of it no more; but the resolutions of a poet are like maternal anger. A few months afterwards, the original sketch of the unfortunate Sophonisba, thus sacrificed, fell into my hands. I read it over, and found something to commend: hence I was induced once more to attempt its versification, to abridge it, and endeavour by the excellence of the style to supply, or at least conceal, the inherent faults of the subject. Though I was then as now fully persuaded that it could never be rendered a tragedy of the first order, I had not the courage to relinquish it, because it was the only subject which could enable me to pourtray the grand and heroic sentiments of the Romans and Carthagenians. I am even proud of some scenes in this feeble tragedy.

At this period it appeared to me that a complete edition of my tragedies was much

wanted, and I determined to avail myself of my present residence in Paris to commence this undertaking, resolved to spare neither expence nor fatigue to render it perfect, and worthy of public patronage. Before fixing on a printer, since they were to be brought out in Italian, I sent to the press my Eulogy on Trajan, which I had corrected the year before, in order that I might obtain a specimen of the talents and execution of the person with whom I meant to entrust my great work.

As this eulogy was but short, it was finished in about a month. I had reason to congratulate myself on my caution, since I found it necessary, from the execution of this essay, to change my printer. I then entered into arrangements with the elder Didot, an enlightened man, and enthusiastically devoted to his art; he was besides extremely careful, and sufficiently well acquainted with the Italian.

In May, 1787, the first volume of my tragedies was put to press: this was only intended to serve as a kind of mutual pledge, since I was to return to Alsace in June,

where it was my intention to remain till the following winter; consequently the impression could not be got forward, though arrangements had been made for transmitting the proofs weekly to me for correction. Thus I pledged myself to re-visit in the winter this country, to which I had always the greatest repugnance. I took care that love and glory should impel me forward. I left with Didot the manuscripts of the preliminary dissertations, and of the three first tragedies, which I absurdly conceived could receive no farther polish or improvement; but no sooner had some of the sheets been printed, than I perceived how grossly I had deceived myself.

My love of tranquillity, the delightful situation of my country-house, the society of my cherished friend, with whom I now constantly resided, my books, my favourite horses—all these objects made me eagerly hasten back to Alsace. The pleasure I hoped to derive from this excursion was also greatly heightened by my friend Caluso having promised to spend the summer with us. He was the best and most worthy ma

I ever knew, and the only friend who remained to me since the death of Gandellini. Some weeks after our arrival in Alsace, my fair friend and I set out express for Geneva to meet the good Abbé, intending to return with him by the way of Swisserland to our country-house near Colmar, where I found united every thing which could render existence desirable. The first conversation which my friend held with me turned, to my great surprise, on my domestic concerns. He had been commissioned by my excellent mother to make to me a proposition of marriage, which, considering my age and character, was highly absurd. He made it laughing, and I refused it in the same manner. In order to convey some idea of the maternal affection and simple manners of this respectable woman, I shall here transcribe the letter which she wrote to me on this subject.*

The affair of the marriage being dismissed, my friend and I entered on more pleasing topics, the discussion of literary sub-

* See Appendix.

jects. The want of an enlightened friend, for the last two years, who could converse in Italian, and on Italian literature, had proved extremely injurious to me, especially in regard to the art of versification. It is certain that if Voltaire and Rousseau, who have acquired so much renown in France, had wandered during the greatest part of their lives in countries where different languages were spoken, and where they could find no one to converse with in their own, they would not have had the perseverance and steadiness to write from the mere love of literature, or for their own satisfaction, as I have done, and still continue to do, though compelled to associate with *barbarians*.

We can justly apply to the rest of Europe, and even to a great part of Italy itself, this denomination respecting every thing which relates to Italian literature. If we write pure Italian, and attempt to compose verses in imitation of the style of Petrarch and Dante, we may well inquire, if there is one man in Italy who could understand and relish these divine authors.—To say one in

a thousand would be too many. Being, however, an enthusiastic admirer of the sublime and beautiful, which I take every opportunity to proclaim, I would rather compose in a language which may be almost termed dead, and for a people nearly extinct. I would rather, I affirm, be unknown to my cotemporaries than write in the harsh and unharmonious French and English, though their cannons and their armies have rendered these languages fashionable. I would rather be the author of ten good Italian verses, even with the certainty of seeing them despised and neglected for the moment, than write in either English, French, or any similar jargon, the merit of which consists solely in the powers of the speaker, though assured that my productions would be every where read, admired, and applauded. There is a great difference to our own ears in sounding a fine toned lyre, even when no one is present to listen, and blowing a detestable French-horn, however much an ignorant audience might applaud the performance.

I frequently vented my indignation in

a similar strain to the worthy Abbé, which never failed to tranquillize my mind. The happiness, which was to me equally new as delightful, of passing my days with two worthy and dearly cherished beings, did not long continue. An accident happened to my friend, which soon disturbed our repose. One day, when riding together, he fell from his horse, and dislocated his wrist. At first I believed he had fractured his arm, or even sustained a greater injury, which agitated me very much; but very soon I had not to lament for my friend alone. In two days I was myself attacked with a violent and obstinate dysentery, the progress of which was so rapid, that in fifteen days I was reduced to the last extremity. It was not accompanied with fever, but I was so much exhausted, and my natural heat so greatly diminished, that the fomentations of aromatized wine, which were applied to my stomach and bowels, in order to impart some degree of activity to those weakened organs, though so extremely hot as to take off my skin, as well as that from the hands of the domestics, nevertheless conveyed to me such

a sensation of cold as proved extremely disagreeable. My vitality seemed completely extinguished, except in my head, which, though weak, was perfectly clear. At the end of fifteen days my malady began to abate, and gradually diminished till the thirtieth. In six week I was convalescent, but reduced to a perfect skeleton, and so extremely feeble, that during fourteen weeks I was obliged to be lifted into another bed while my own was adjusted. I truly despaired of my recovery: I shuddered at the idea of death: I could not think with calmness on leaving my two worthy friends, and relinquishing that fame, which for ten years I had toiled to obtain, and the dawn of which I had just begun to perceive. I was fully conscious that none of my works were so perfect as I could have rendered them had more time been allowed me. On the other hand, I consoled myself with the reflection that since I must leave this world I should die without having become a slave, and that two persons who were the most dear to me, and whose esteem and friendship I flattered

myself I had merited, would watch over my last moments, and, in short, that I should quit life without having experienced any of those moral and physical evils which accompany old age. I had communicated to Calúso my intentions respecting the tragedies which had been sent to the press; and he undertook the office of corrector, which my recovery, however, rendered unnecessary. When I afterwards found the long, assiduous, and wearisome labour, which it was necessary to bestow on the proofs, I became convinced that, had I not recovered, all my previous labour would have been thrown away, so very essential are colouring and polish to the perfection of poetry.

Fate, however, spared my life, and my tragedies received the last polish from my own hands. I shall be sufficiently compensated for all my labour, if they preserve my name from being consigned to oblivion.

My health, as I have already said, became re-established, but my head continued so weak, that I was unable to bestow on the proofs of the three first tragedies, which passed successively through my hands in

the space of four months, the tenth part of those corrections which I might otherwise have made in them. This was the reason why two years afterwards, when the edition was completed, I re-printed them. My only object in taking such a step was a desire to do justice to the dramatic art, and perhaps to secure my own reputation. There are certainly very few individuals who could understand or attend to the various alterations I made in them with respect to style; changes, which taken singly, appear extremely trifling, but which, in the aggregate, are more important than is generally conceived.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Three Years Residence in Paris—Edition of all my Tragedies.—I print many other Works at Kehl.

My health was somewhat re-established, when the worthy Abbé, who was perfectly recovered from his accident, and who had some literary occupations at Turin, where he was secretary to the Academy of Sciences, proposed to take a journey to Strasburg, before departing for Italy. Though still feeble, I was anxious to accompany him, in order to prolong the satisfaction I felt in his society; and we accordingly set out, accompanied by my fair friend, on this excursion, in the month of October. We proceeded to view the magnificent printing press belonging to M. de Beaumarchais at

Kehl, and Baskerville's types, which were to be employed in printing a complete edition of Voltaire's works. The beauty of these characters, the accuracy of the workmen, the intimacy which had subsisted between me and M. de Beaumarchais at Paris, all rendered me anxious to engage him to print the whole of my works, except my dramatic productions, and which would have experienced many obstacles from the censors then existing in France, whose cavilling and delays were extremely vexatious. I always felt the greatest reluctance in submitting to the revision which preceded the printing. I neither desire nor expect to be suffered to print every thing, but I have in this respect adopted the laws of England, which I will hold by. I never composed any work which I could not have published with the greatest freedom in that country, without any blame being attached either to the author or printer. Complete freedom of opinion, a profound respect for the laws, and an anxious wish not to injure any individual: such have always been the rules I prescribed to myself.

After having obtained from Beaumar-

chais permission to employ his printing press, I took advantage of my present excursion to leave the manuscript of my five Odes on American Independence, which being a small work, I intended should serve as a specimen. The impression was so beautiful, and so accurate, that, during the two succeeding years, I printed at this press all my other works which I have published or intend to publish. Every week the proofs were transmitted to me at Paris, and I occupied myself in altering and re-altering whole verses: to this I was led not more by an anxious wish to render them as perfect as possible, as by the astonishing docility and complaisance of the printers at Kehl, whom I can never sufficiently commend: they were very different from the printers, compositors, and pressmen of Didot, who frequently threw me into the greatest rage, and made terrible attacks on my purse, by forcing me to pay most extravagantly for every correction I was inclined to make; so that whilst others are recompensed for improvements, I was obliged to pay for correcting, or at least changing, my faults.

From Strasburg we returned to Colmar,

and a few days afterwards, towards the end of October, my worthy friend departed for Turin, leaving me full of regret for his absence, and anxious again to enjoy his society. We remained the whole of November, and part of December, in the country. During this period my strength became gradually recruited, and I employed myself in versifying the second Brutus, which I could correct and polish at leisure, as it was intended to be the last piece in the collection.

I arrived in Paris, where I had agreed to take up my residence. Here I was so fortunate as to find a very pleasant and quiet residence in the Faubourg Saint Germain, at the termination of Mount-Parnassus. The situation was beautiful, the view picturesque, and the air excellent. We here enjoyed all the solitude of the country. It seemed to me, as if I were once more in Rome, at the baths of Diocletian. I had presented my fair friend with the half of my horses, not only because she was in want of them, but in order to free myself from the expence and trouble they occasioned

me: the other half I transported, not without considerable difficulty, to Paris. Once settled, I busied myself in the fatiguing and disagreeable business of correcting the press, which occupied me during three whole years. In February, 1788, my friend received information from Rome of the death of her husband, where he had resided for two years. Although an illness, under which he had laboured for several months, might have prepared her for this event; though she was left a widow, and absolute mistress of herself; though she had lost in him only a tyrant, and not a friend; I was an eye witness to the surprise and grief which she testified on this occasion, and which was neither feigned nor exaggerated: never could dissimulation find entrance into a heart so noble and pure as her's. Unquestionably, her husband, notwithstanding the great disparity of their years, might have found in her a valuable companion, and if not a woman who loved him, at least a true friend, had he not disgusted and persecuted her by his harsh and brutal manners. I must here bear testimony to the truth.

I continued during the whole of 1788 occupied with the superintendence of the printing of my works; and on the fourth volume being finished, I wrote notes on the whole of the tragedies, which I intended to insert at the end of the edition. At this time the printing of my Odes, the Dialogue, Etruria, and other Poetical Pieces, was finished at Kehl. I had laboured with the greatest assiduity, in order to free myself at once from the slavery of correction: and I continued with the same ardour to attend to the press during the following year, so that by the month of August the Paris edition of my tragedies was finished, and my two prose works on Government and Literature, and on Tyranny, were also completed at Kehl.

It was at this period that the panegyric I had written in 1787 fell in my way. I found in it much to correct, which I immediately set about, being anxious that it should proceed from the press of Didot, as I wished all my works to be well printed. I added to it an ode on the destruction of the Bastile, which I had composed, having been an eye witness of the commencement

of the troubles in Paris; and I terminated this volume by a little apologue applicable to existing circumstances. Nothing now remained for me to print except the melodrama of Abel, and the translation of Sallust. I preserved the first, intending at the time to pursue still farther this species of writing, and the second, because I entertained not the most remote idea that I should ever enter on the laborious task of translation.

CHAPTER XIX.

Commencement of the Troubles in France.—My Opinions respecting the present and future State of this Kingdom.

DURING the month of April, 1789, I lived in perpetual disquiet: I dreaded every moment lest the public tumults, which occurred at Paris since the convocation of the states general, might prevent me from completing the impression of my works, and that, after all my labour, toil, and expence, I should suffer shipwreck when almost in sight of a haven to shelter my weather-beaten bark. I hurried on the execution of the work as much as possible, but Didot's workmen did not co-operate with my exertions: they were so completely absorbed in politics, that they spent whole days in reading newspapers, instead

of proceeding with the printing of my book. I thought they were all mad: my joy, therefore, may be readily conceived, when the day at length arrived on which my tragedies were packed up, and forwarded to Italy and other countries. My satisfaction, however, was not of long duration: things proceeded from bad to worse: the public safety and tranquillity diminished every day, while in a proportionate degree uncertainty, and the most ominous presages of the future, became augmented. When individuals, like my fair friend and I, are surrounded by monkeys, and have to do with them, it is impossible to remain at ease, since it cannot be affirmed that the desire of doing mischief may not seize them.

During one year, I saw and witnessed in silence the progress of the deplorable effects resulting from the *learned ignorance* of this nation, which can copiously prattle on every subject, but which will never ultimately succeed in any thing, because it understands not the practical mode of managing mankind, as our political prophet

Machiavel long ago remarked. My heart was torn asunder on beholding the holy and sublime cause of liberty betrayed by self-called philosophers—so much did I revolt at witnessing their ignorance, their folly, and their crimes; at beholding the military power, and the insolence and licentiousness of the civilians stupidly made, the basis of what they termed political liberty, that I henceforth desired nothing more ardently than to leave a country, which, like a lunatic hospital, contained only fools or incurables. I should have then left it without delay, if my better half had not been detained by unfortunate circumstances.

Rendered almost stupid by the continual doubts and fears which I had experienced since the impression of my tragedies, I led a life of gloomy despondency, and might rather be said to vegetate than to live. My mind had become so torpid and inactive by having so long been occupied with correcting and other concerns of the printing press, that I was rendered almost incapable of any dignified or laudable pursuit. I daily, however, received information from all

quarters, to which my dramatic works had been forwarded, that they sold well, and gave general satisfaction: but as I only received this intelligence from individuals, who were my friends, or were benevolently disposed towards me, I did not place such implicit reliance on it as to abandon myself to that joy which I otherwise should have felt on the occasion. In short, I resolved equally to disregard praise and censure, unless supported by correct and impartial reasoning. But though I anxiously, and on every occasion, invited philosophic criticism, which would have proved not less beneficial to my productions than to the dramatic art in general, I never could obtain it. I regarded any thing else as unworthy of notice: I knew beforehand what would be said; nevertheless, I spared neither attention nor time to render my pieces as perfect as possible. My memory may, perhaps, be more honoured, since, though undeceived in regard to all my expectations, I yet persevered in endeavouring to write well, rather than to write quickly, and because I have never yielded up my

opinions but to the omnipotence of truth alone.

With regard to my different works printed at Kehl, I wished only at the time to publish that on American Independence, and on Departed Virtue, reserving the others for a less disastrous period. I was anxious that no one should accuse me, of what I certainly did not deserve, leaguing myself with villains, by promulgating similar doctrines, which, however, they neither understood, nor were capable of putting in practice. Notwithstanding this resolution, I was inclined to print them, because, as I have already stated, a favourable opportunity offered for this purpose, and because I was convinced that the posthumous works of any author are extremely different from those printed during his life-time. No work can be pronounced finished till it has received the last corrections of the author in going through the press. This, indeed, will not render a production perfect, as may too frequently be observed, but at least it cannot be so without it.

I here terminate this biographical sketch

at Paris, on the 27th of May, 1790, at the age of forty-one years and a few months. The sorrowful presentiments with which I was overwhelmed, the state of torpid inactivity into which I had fallen, as well as the consciousness, which I do not hesitate to avow, of not having altogether lived in vain, during the last fourteen years of my life, were among the principal causes which induced me to undertake it. I am determined not to read over again this trifling production till my sixtieth year, if I shall ever reach it, at which period I must certainly have terminated my literary career. Then I shall revise it with all the apathy natural to senescence, and super-add to it the details of my pursuits during the ten or fifteen years following. If I succeed in two or three different kinds of literary composition, in which I propose to try my last strength, I shall subjoin an account of these labours to the epoch of my riper years; while, on the contrary, should the subsequent years of my life prove altogether sterile, I shall commence, on resuming my general narrative, with the fifth period,

my old age and second childhood. If I still then retain sufficient reason and judgment, it must be necessarily very brief, as being in every respect void of utility.

If, however, as is most probable, I should die in the interval, I entreat all those who may take an interest in my concerns, and into whose hands this production may fall, to make what use of it they think proper. Should they publish it in its present state, I flatter myself they will discover throughout at the same time indications of candour and of precipitation, which I trust may lead them to palliate any faults in the style. Nothing farther will be necessary to complete my biography, than for my friends to subjoin an account of the time, place, and manner of my death. With regard to the state of my mind at this juncture, they may boldly assure the reader, in my name, that I have but too feelingly experienced the vanity and deceit of this world, and that I feel no other pang in quitting it, except that which is inseparably associated with the idea of separating from my fair and inestimable friend: and as, during the re-

mainder of my days, I value existence for her sake alone, I am neither agitated nor appalled by any other reflection than that of losing her. I ask from heaven only one boon---that I may be the first to quit this vale of tears. If, however, the friends into whose hands these manuscripts may fall should think it necessary to commit them to the flames, they are at liberty to do so. I merely supplicate, that should they be disposed to publish these memoirs, that however they may think proper to abridge, or alter them, with respect to style, they will neither amplify nor retrench, nor suppress any of the facts I have detailed. If, in composing this biographical sketch, my first object had not been to depict myself such as I really am, and to exhibit myself without disguise to those few who may wish to be made acquainted with my character, I should doubtless have compressed the account of these forty-one years of my life, and with a studied brevity, and dissembled pride, not unworthy of Tacitus, reduced them to three or four pages at most. But I chose rather to pourtray the

features of my character than to display my wit and genius as a writer. Whatever little ability I may possess, I have bestowed on my other productions, while in these memoirs I wished merely to lay open my heart, and, like an egotistical old man, to descant on myself, and consequently on man, such as he really is when undisguised, and without a mask.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE FOURTH EPOCH.

My first occupation, on finally settling at Florence, was the perusal of the biographical sketch I had written at Paris thirteen years before, the style of which I now endeavoured to improve, and render more easy and harmonious. Being thus recalled to the contemplation of myself, I was induced to give an account of my literary productions during this intervening period, as some of them appeared to me not wholly devoid of interest. As my physical and moral faculties proportionally decline as I descend into the vale of years; as, moreover, it is highly probable that my literary career is for ever closed, this second part,

which will be much shorter than the first, will also, I flatter myself, be the last. Having now nearly completed my eleventh lustrum, and no longer possessing either the mental or corporeal vigour necessary to literary composition, I could have indeed little to add to the account already given.

CONTINUATION

OF

THE FOURTH EPOCH.

CHAPTER XX.

I begin to translate Virgil and Terence—My Object in this Undertaking.

While I led, as I have already said, an uneasy and indolent life at Paris, though I contemplated many projects, yet I found myself incapable of executing any of them. In the month of June, 1790, I undertook, for the sake of amusement, to translate some detached portions of the Æneid. The pieces I selected, on this occasion, were those from the perusal of which I had

derived the highest gratification. On finding that this occupation proved to me no less useful than agreeable, I entered on the first book. What, moreover, stimulated me to this undertaking, was the dread of losing the habit I had acquired of composing blank verse. As, however, I became weary of this monotonous employment, in order to diversify my pursuits, I undertook also the translation of Terence. The study of so excellent a model would, I trusted, enable me at a subsequent period to write comedies, and facilitate my acquisition of a style in this species of dramatic writing, not less original than that which I had formerly employed in the composition of tragedies. Thus I translated every other day alternately Virgil and Terence, till I quitted Paris, towards the end of April, when I had accomplished the translation of the four first books of the Æneid, and three of Terence's comedies — the Andrian, the Eunuch, and the Self-tormentor. With a view to dissipate the gloomy reflections associated in my mind with passing occurrences, I directed my attention to the im-

provement of my memory, which attention to the composition and printing of my works had made me wholly overlook. I read over again with enthusiasm various choice pieces of Horace, Virgil, and Juvenal, as well as Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto, thus storing my mind with verse. While these occupations rendered my imagination torpid, they deprived me of the faculty of executing any thing which solely depended on myself. Of six melo-tragedies, which I had it in contemplation to compose, I succeeded only in perfecting Abel. Distracted by such various pursuits, my time, my youth, and the enthusiasm necessary for such undertakings, were irretrievably lost. During the last year I remained at Paris, and the two following, passed in different places, I composed nothing except a few epigrams and some sonnets, to which I was excited by my just indignation against the slave-trade, and the melancholy state of my mind. I also attempted to write a mixed drama, entitled Count Ugolino, which I wished to add to my mele-tragedies. But after hav-

ing conceived it, I did not succeed in its development. During the month of October, 1790, I undertook, in company with my fair friend, a short excursion into Normandy by the way of Rouen, Caën, and Havre; this province, which I had never before seen, highly gratified and soothed my mind. These three last years, which were devoted to the printing of my works, and passed in affliction, had altogether exhausted my mental and corporeal powers. Observing, during the month of April, that affairs in France became every day more embroiled, I determined, if possible, to seek a more secure asylum elsewhere. Besides, as my fair friend wished much to visit England, a country differing in so many respects from every other, I determined to embrace the opportunity of accompanying her thither, and we accordingly set out on this journey without delay.

CHAPTER XXI.

Fourth Journey to England and Holland—Return to Paris, where Circumstances compel me to fix my Abode.

We set out on this journey towards the latter end of April, 1791, and as we intended to remain for a considerable time in England, we took with us our horses, and gave up our house in Paris. We reached London in a very few days. While my fair friend was highly delighted with this country in a variety of respects, she was but little pleased with it in regard to some others. As for me, to whom the country was not new, though I still admired it on account of its government, this admiration was not so excessive as on my two former visits. The climate and mode of living

were also less agreeable to me than on my third visit. The protracted pleasures of the table, and the sitting up till two or three o'clock in the morning, constituted a mode of life not less unfavourable to literary pursuits than to the enjoyment of mental and bodily vigour.

I soon became attacked with an irregular gout, which, in this cursed island, is absolutely indigenous; and as soon as the charm of novelty was over with my friend, we longed to quit England. It was in the month of June, this year, that Lewis XVI. on attempting to leave his kingdom, was forced back from Varennes, and more closely guarded than ever. In consequence of this event, the political horizon became daily more gloomy, and we felt ourselves extremely embarrassed with regard to our precuniary concerns. Each of us had three-fourths of our property in France, where specie had wholly disappeared, and paper money had been issued to a vast amount to supply its place. This daily fell in value, and we soon found our property in consequence of this rapid depreciation

reduced to almost nothing. Gloomy, and forced by imperious necessity, we determined to submit to it, and dismal as was the prospect before our eyes, it behooved us to return to France as the only country in which we could subsist on our depreciated paper. During the month of August, before quitting England, we visited Bath, Bristol, and Oxford. We then returned to London, whence we set out for Dover, and embarked a few days afterwards for France.

While I remained at this place a romantic adventure occurred to me, which I shall here briefly relate. During my third journey to England, in 1783, and 1784, I neither learned nor sought to obtain any tidings respecting the lady on whose account I had exposed myself to so many risks. I only knew from public report that she had quitted London, that her husband died shortly after obtaining the divorce, and that she had espoused an unknown and obscure individual. During the four months which I spent in England, I never heard so much as her name pronounced, and knew not even

if she still existed. When ready to embark, I wished to go on board the packet-boat about a quarter of an hour before my fair friend, in order to see if every thing was in readiness. When on the point of entering it, casting my eyes towards the beach, where a great concourse of people had assembled, the first object I beheld was the female of whom I had once been so deeply enamoured. She appeared scarcely less lovely than what she had been twenty years before. At first sight I thought I recognized her, but on looking more steadfastly, she cast on me a gracious smile, which convinced me I was not mistaken. The emotions which were excited in my mind on again beholding her I find myself utterly incompetent to describe. I had sufficient resolution, however, to avoid speaking to her, and jumping immediately into the packet-boat, did not again go ashore. Within a quarter of an hour my fair friend came on board, and the anchor was immediately weighed. She informed me that some persons, in accompanying her aboard the packet, had not only pointed out the lady,

but given her name, and some anecdotes of her past and present modes of life. I related to my friend, between whom and myself no dissimulation was ever practised, the manner in which I had recognised her. On landing at Calais, finding myself still affected by the unexpected sight of a woman on whose account I had been led to commit so many acts of extravagance, I thought it incumbent on me to address her by letter, which I sent under cover to a banker at Dover, requesting him to deliver it into her own hands, and to forward her answer to me at Brussels, where I should arrive in a few days. I am now truly grieved that I did not keep a copy of this letter, which must doubtless have been filled with the most impassioned sentiments. These were not dictated by any latent love on my part, but merely inspired by a feeling of sorrow and regret, on account of her unsettled and wandering life, so little suitable to her former rank and condition in society. These feelings were still farther augmented by the harrowing reflection that I had, though innocently, afforded a pre-

text for it. Had not our intrigue been promulgated, she might have concealed, either entirely or in part, her irregularities, and perhaps retrieved her character by her subsequent conduct. On my arrival at Brussels, about a month afterwards, I received her answer, which I have transcribed verbatim,* as it will afford an idea of her obstinacy, which was carried to an extreme seldom to be met with in the softer sex. Our acquaintance with such eccentricities of character may also serve to improve our knowledge of mankind.

On our landing at Calais, we resolved, previous to returning to our prison in France, to make a tour through the United Provinces, as my friend wished to avail herself of an opportunity, which might never again return, of viewing a country which exhibits so conspicuous an example of the efforts of human industry.

We travelled along the coast as far as Bruges and Ostend, and from thence proceeded by the way of Antwerp and Rotterdam to Amsterdam, the Hague, and North

* See Appendix.

Holland. About the end of September we again returned to Brussels, in which resided the mother and sisters of my amiable friend. After spending several weeks in this city, we again set out for France, in which cruel circumstances compelled us to take up our abode.

CHAPTER XXII.

Flight from Paris—We traverse Flanders and Germany, and at length fix our Abode in Florence.

Two months were nearly spent before we could find out a commodious house, and furnish it suitably to our inclinations. Though we flattered ourselves that every succeeding day would bring tranquillity and peace, yet we more frequently despaired of such a desirable change. During this alternate fluctuation between hope and fear, my friend and I, like every one who resided in Paris, led a very solitary life. The books left behind at Rome in 1783 had been forwarded, according to my instructions, nearly two years ago: these, with others I had purchased during my residence

at Paris, London, and Holland, amounted to a very considerable collection. Thus, I possessed all that was essential to me in my contracted literary sphere. In the enjoyment of my books, and the society of my inestimable friend, I experienced every domestic consolation. My happiness suffered no alloy, excepting from a dread that this state of peace and tranquillity would not be permanent. This idea finally took such possession of my mind as to render me incapable of any serious study. By way of occupying myself, however, with something, I prosecuted my translation of Virgil and Terence. Neither during my last nor former stay at Paris, did I ever wish to associate with, or to be personally introduced to any of the demagogues of the day, for whom I felt the most invincible antipathy, and the most profound contempt. At the moment I am writing, I can boast that during the fourteen years the *tragic farce lasted,* I was uncontaminated in thought, word, or deed, never having seen or held any correspondence with the despots who governed, or with the slaves who trammelled

themselves to their ears. In the month of March, this year, I received letters from my mother: they were the last she ever wrote me, and expressed her maternal fears for my safety, in a country, where, she said, anarchy prevailed, where the exercise of the catholic religion was no longer permitted by law, and in which new troubles and disorders might be expected to arise. Her predictions were, alas! too soon verified; but when I pursued my journey to Italy, this worthy and excellent woman was no more. She quitted this life on the 23rd of April, 1792, at the age of seventy years. The war between France and the Emperor of Germany, which proved so disastrous in the sequel, had now been declared. In the month of June attempts were made not only to annihilate royalty itself, but even the very name of king. The conspiracy having failed to accomplish its object on the twentieth of June, things continued nearly on the same footing till the ever memorable tenth of August, when it again burst forth. It will not be here improper to transcribe the details which I transmitted of this affair in

a letter to the Abbé Caluso, written on the fourteenth of the same month.*

After the occurrence of this event, my mind became wholly occupied with the idea of rescuing my fair friend from the imminent dangers that threatened us on every side. I lost not a moment in taking the proper measures to secure our flight, and on the twelfth, every preparation had been made for our departure. One difficulty, however, still remained to be overcome, that of obtaining our passports. During two or three days, I exerted every effort, and at length, on the fifteenth, we obtained them as foreigners, I from the Venetian envoy, and my friend from the Danish ambassador, the only ministers who had not yet quitted the court of Lewis XVI. now stripped of almost every vestige of royalty. But we still found it more difficult to procure passports from our section of Mont-Blanc. It was necessary, however, that individuals of every rank, whether in the situation of masters or servants, should possess one, accurately describing their age, stature, sex, the colour of their hair,

* See Appendix.

eyes, &c. Furnished with these badges of slavery, we fixed on Monday, the twentieth of August, for our departure. A dread, however, lest some obstacles should occur to prevent us putting our design into execution, caused us to set off on the eighteenth, two days sooner than we had originally intended. We had scarcely reached the Barriere Blanche, that lay directly in our road to Calais, to which place we intended to proceed, in order to escape as quickly as possible from this wretched country, than we discovered three or four national guards, with an officer. After examining our passports, they seemed disposed to open the gates of our immense prison, when about thirty individuals, of the lowest description, sallied out of a wretched inn near the barrier. They were half naked, furious, and in a state of intoxication. As soon as they beheld our two carriages, loaded with portmanteaus, and baggage of every kind, with two female attendants, besides three male domestics, they began to vociferate, that if all the rich were thus allowed to leave Paris, and carry off their wealth, they

would be reduced to utter beggary and wretchedness. On this, an altercation took place between the national guards and these miserable wretches. While the former attempted to open for us a passage, the latter endeavoured forcibly to detain us. Upon this, I immediately sprang out of my carriage into the midst of this rabble, and, fortified by my seven passports, began to altercate, vociferate, and make a noise like themselves, knowing, by experience, that this was the only means to succeed with Frenchmen. They were perused one after another by those among them who could read. Furious, and foaming with rage, I heeded not the danger which menaced us at this instant. I tore my passport three times from their hands, exclaiming aloud, "Observe! listen! my name is Alfieri: I am an Italian by birth, and not a Frenchman. View me attentively, and consider whether I am not the identical individual whom the passports describe as tall, meagre, pale, and red-haired. My passport is genuine: I have obtained it from those who have power to grant it. I wish to

pass, and by heavens I will pass." During the continuance of this tumult, which lasted for about half an hour, I kept a good countenance, to which circumstance, I am inclined to think, we in a great measure owed our safety. In the mean time a mob had collected around us, while some of the rabble vociferated, Let us set fire to their carriages; others cried out, Let us stone them; but the majority insisted, that as we were rich, noble, and meant to emigrate, we should instantly be conducted to the Hotel de Ville, in order to be tried. In short, the occasional interposition of the four national guards in our favour, the incessant noise I made with my Stentorian voice, the open display of our passports, and, above all, the continuance of the altercation for at least half an hour, at length so exhausted these *tyger-monkeys*, that their opposition to our departure began to abate. At this moment, on a signal being given by the guards, I sprung into the carriage, where I had left my fair friend, whose situation may readily be conceived: the postillions mounted their horses; and

on the barrier being thrown open, drove off at full gallop, amidst the groans, hisses, insults, and curses of this infuriated rabble. It was extremely fortunate that the advice of those who wished to carry us back to the Hotel de Ville did not prevail; for as our carriages were loaded with baggage, and as we travelled with a considerable retinue, we certainly ran the greatest risk of being taken for emigrants. Had we been once carried before the municipality, instead of being allowed to depart, we should most probably have been sent to prison, and closed our existence, like many others who were massacred, on the second of September, fifteen days after this occurrence.

Having effected our escape from this earthly hell, we travelled with all possible speed, and reached Calais in two days and a half, during which we were forced to produce our passports not less than forty times. I afterwards discovered that we were the only foreigners who had effected their escape out of the kingdom after the catastrophe of the tenth of August. In every municipality where it was necessary

to present our passports, all those who cast their eyes over them evinced terror and dismay. They bore the name of the king, which had been afterwards erazed. They were ignorant of the events which had taken place, and felt appalled.

Such were the auspices under which we escaped out of France, firmly resolved never more to enter it. After arriving at Calais, we experienced no farther obstruction in pursuing our journey by Gravelines to the frontiers of Flanders. We had taken the road to Calais, for as peace still continued with England, it was less difficult to proceed in this direction than through Flanders, where war had already commenced. As soon as we reached Brussels, my fair friend determined, in order that she might recruit her exhausted spirits, to remain a month in the country with her sister and worthy brother-in-law. While there, we received letters from the domestics whom we had left behind at Paris. They informed us, that on Monday, the twentieth of August, the day fixed on for our departure, which fortunately I had anticipated,

the section, from which we had obtained our passports, had sent to arrest my amiable friend, and carry her to prison. It is scarcely possible to conceive an instance of more gross stupidity and folly; but her crimes were well known: she was rich, noble, and of an irreproachable character. As for me, who have uniformly considered myself of inferior estimation, I was not deemed worthy of such an honour. Finding they could not discover us, they immediately confiscated our horses, furniture, books, and all that we possessed, and sequestrated our revenues, declaring us emigrants. We afterwards learned the dreadful catastrophe and horrors of the second of September, and returned thanks to heaven for having rescued us from them.

When we understood that the political horizon in France became every day more dark and gloomy, that the *soi-disant* republic was solely maintained through the influence of terror, and the shedding of blood, we were thankful that the whole of our property had not been involved in the general wreck.

On the first of October we set out for Italy, and in our progress passed through Aix-la-Chapelle, Frankfort, Augsburg, and Inspruck. We crossed the Alps in high spirits, animated with the idea of once more finding ourselves in our own happy country. The pleasure of having escaped from a horde of barbarians, of treading in company with my amiable friend the same road which I had so frequently travelled to see her, the gratification of enjoying her society without restraint, and the contemplation of resuming my cherished studies, so tranquillized my spirits, that, feeling myself again inspired with poetic fervour, I composed a great number of verses. At length, on the third of November, we arrived at Florence, where we determined to take up our residence. There the charms of the country, and of the language, compensated me for all the losses I had sustained in France.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I gradually resume my Studies, and finish my Translations—I find myself very happily situated at Florence.

We spent nearly a whole year at Florence, before we could find a house perfectly suited to our taste. In the mean time, the exquisite pleasure I derived from hearing my vernacular tongue daily spoken, from meeting with individuals who sometimes entered into conversation respecting my tragedies, the satisfaction of seeing them frequently, though badly represented, all conspired to revive in me that love of literature which had almost become extinct.

My first production, after three years of inaction, was An Apology for Lewis XVI. which I wrote in the month of December,

As soon as this was completed, I resumed my translations of Terence and the Æneid; and during the subsequent year, 1793, concluded the rough copy of them. I next began to re-copy my Sallust, the only work to which I had devoted any part of my time in my journies to England, during which, moreover, I read oftener than once the whole works of Cicero. I not only corrected this translation, but gave to it, as I conceived, a higher polish. I composed also a short historical and satirical view of the French revolution, which I prefixed by way of introduction to a collection of sonnets, epigrams, and other poetical pieces, written on these mournful as well as ridiculous events. This work I entitled the Anti-gallican.

Though both my amiable friend and I had lost a great part of our property, we still had sufficient left to live comfortably. My attachment for her augmented with our misfortunes, and in proportion as she was persecuted by fortune, the more dear did she become to me. Thus my melancholy was dissipated, my spirits became tranquil-

lized, and the love of letters again took possession of my mind. I devoted myself again to study, but soon found that I was in want of books. I only possessed a hundred and fifty volumes of the small editions of the classics: the others had been lost, and I never made any serious effort to recover them, except once through the medium of a friend, the Italian envoy at Paris. This request was expressed in an epigram, which I transmitted to him in 1795. Both this epigram and the answer may be found in a long note subjoined to the second prose piece in the Anti-gallican. After finishing Abel, I had conceived the plan of five other melo-dramas, but soon found it necessary to abandon them. My past and present disappointments, the dissipation of the best part of my youth in superintending for five years the impression of my various works, together with the misfortunes to which I had been subjected during that period, all tended to extinguish in my mind that vigour and energy so necessary to ensure success in productions of this kind. As soon as I perceived that it behooved me

to abandon this long-cherished idea, I directed my attention to the composition of satires, of which I had already written one that might serve as an introduction to others. Having, moreover, acquired some experience in this species of composition, while employed in finishing the different pieces contained in the Anti-gallican, I flattered myself that success was not beyond my reach. Thus stimulated by hope, I completed the second, and part of the third. As my spirits were, however, far from being tranquil, and as besides I was very uncomfortably situated, and in want of books, resolution to prosecute the undertaking soon abandoned me.

From the combined influence of these and other causes, I became seized with the whim of playing a part in one of my own tragedies. Among my juvenile acquaintances at Florence, I had discovered a few, besides a lady, who appeared not only to possess taste, but even some talents for this art. After rehearsing Saul, we acted it during the spring of 1793, in a private house, before a select audience, and with

much success. Towards the end of this year, we found out near the end of the bridge of Santa Trinita a house, which, though small, was admirably adapted for our accommodation, situated on the Arno, and facing the south. We took possession of it in November, since which I have uniformly occupied it. I shall here probably close my earthly career, should fate cease to persecute me. The salubrity of the air, and the charming prospect I enjoy, besides other conveniences attached to this house, have in a great measure restored my intellectual faculties, and powers of conception, excepting for melo-tragedies, in which I find it still impossible to succeed. By devoting so much of my time to the pleasure of acting a part in my own tragedies, I spent nearly three months in the spring of 1794. Saul was first represented at my house, and afterwards Brutus the Elder, in each of which I acted the principal character. It was affirmed by those who were competent judges, and I had some reason to believe their opinion correct, that I had made considerable progress in this difficult art. Had

I been younger, and less harassed with care, I have reason to think I should have succeeded completely. Every time I performed my powers augmented; I conceived my part better, acquired a greater command of voice, and a more perfect cadence; besides which, I became progressively more capable of assuming those attitudes necessary to impart animation to the expressions, and to give effect to the character. The company also became more perfect in performing their respective parts under my guidance. I then clearly perceived, that had I possessed riches, opportunity, and health, I might, in the course of two or three years, have succeeded in forming a company of tragic actors, if not excellent, at least superior to those who then arrogated to themselves that character in Italy.

My entering so much into this amusement contributed not only to retard my literary pursuits this year, but also during the following, 1795, in which I appeared in the capacity of a player for the last time. I successively performed the parts of Carlos, and of Philippe, in the two tragedies

so named, and on another occasion that of Saul, which was my favourite character. This last piece was also acted by a private company at Pisa, during the Festival of the Illumination, to which I was invited. I had the childish vanity to accept of this invitation, and to appear once more in the character of Saul, after which I took a final leave of the stage.

During the two years I resided in Tuscany, I purchased various books, and among others the Italian authors I had formerly possessed. To these I added not only the Latin classics, but also the best Græco-Latin editions of all the Greek classics, as much from a desire of having them in my possession, as of, at least, rendering myself acquainted with their names.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Shame and Curiosity impel me to peruse the literal Translation of Homer, and the tragic Authors of Greece—I continue, though with languor, my satirical and other trifling Productions.

Better late than never.

When I reflected at forty-six years of age, after having cultivated for nearly half that period, whether successfully or not, an acquaintance with dramatic and lyric poetry, that I had neither read the Greek tragedies, nor Homer, nor Pindar, I felt truly ashamed, and was stimulated by a laudable desire to learn something from these fathers of the art. I the more readily yielded to this impulse, as, for several years, my peregrinations, my horses, my disappointments, and an unremitted atten-

tion to the correction of my works, had so deadened my mind, that I could not aspire to be a man of erudition—a character, to obtain which nothing is more necessary than a retentive memory and much reading. Unfortunately, my memory, which had been good, was greatly impaired. In order, however, to escape from a life of indolence, and to conquer my predilection for the life of a buffoon, as well as to acquire information, I was induced to enter on this undertaking. With this view I read successively Homer, Hesiod, Aristophanes, Anacreon, and the Greek tragedies, all of which I studied attentively in the Latin translations. As for Pindar, I soon found it was labour lost. His lyric flights, literally translated, appeared in my eyes truly pitiful; and not finding myself competent to understand them in the original, I threw them aside. I spent nearly one year and a half in this species of study, which proved equally repugnant to my disposition as unproductive of benefit. I wrote, however, in the interval, some poetical scraps; and during 1796, extended my satires to seven.

This year proved extremely disastrous to Italy, by the invasions of the French, an event which completely overpowered my spirits. I contemplated in imagination misery and slavery hovering over my head. The melancholy posture of affairs in Piedmont made me tremble, lest I should be deprived of the last means of subsistence. Determined never to flatter, nor become a slave, I prepared my mind to support every other reverse of fortune with the fortitude of a philosopher. I plunged deeper than ever into study, which I considered as the only means calculated to abstract my mind from the evils which surrounded me on every side.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Reasons which induced me to study the Greek—Means which I employed in order to succeed.

In 1778, while my highly valued friend Caluso was at Florence, I entreated him, as much through a love of indolence, as from curiosity, that he would write on a loose sheet of paper the Greek alphabet, both in great and small characters; and in this way I learned, though imperfectly, to know the letters, and even to name them.

This circumstance had escaped my memory, till I beg in to peruse the Latin translations, when discovering this alphabet among my papers, I endeavoured to recognize and pronoun e the letters. My intention was merely to acquire the sound of the compound or extraordinary terms which

in the translation resembled not those in the text, and which on that account induced me to cast my eyes on it. In this way I was led to view the characters occasionally, as the fox in the fable is said to have viewed the grapes which were beyond his reach. What also greatly contributed to retard my progress in this study was, that I could not look for any length of time on either the great or small characters, without my sight being dazzled by it. I could never make out more than one word at a time, and even that, however short, I was obliged to spell, but could neither read nor pronounce, much less retain in my mind the sound of a single verse.

My aversion to grammar, my repugnance and incapacity for servile application of any kind, my inaptitude to acquire languages,* my age, my ignorance of all grammatical rules, even in Italian, of which I knew only sufficient to avoid gross blunders, without, however, understanding its principles---such were the physical and moral obstacles which

* I had twice attempted, though without success, to acquire a knowledge of the English.

I had to encounter, and which I essayed to overcome by my own powers. I did not communicate my intention to any one, not even to my fair friend, and that is saying every thing. After having spent two years, as it were, *on the confines of Greece,* without being able to penetrate farther than with my eyes, I became at length determined to surmount every difficulty by my own exertions.

I purchased a great number of Græco-Latin, and afterwards Greek grammars. I incessantly repeated the verb τύπτω, the circumflex verbs, and the verbs in μι. Observing me always muttering something between my teeth, this inestimable friend was anxious to know what I was about, and by her frequent enquiries at length drew from me the secret. Persevering with indefatigable patience, I succeeded towards the end of 1797 in rendering myself capable of reading a page of Greek either in prose or verse, whether in large or small characters, without my eyes suffering by it. I at last even comprehended the text, by comparing it with the Latin column on the

opposite side; that is to say, when I had either forgotten, or was unacquainted with any of the Greek words, I hastily glanced my eye over the corresponding Latin. After mūch difficulty, I acquired the capability of reading with facility, and of accentuating the vowels, and even the dipthongs, as they are written, and not as they are absurdly pronounced by the modern Greeks. These degenerate descendants of a learned nation have insensibly introduced an alphabet with five *ἰῶτα*; so that the most harmonious language in the world becomes in their mouths a continual *iotacism*, like the neighing of a horse. I surmounted this difficulty by reciting in an audible voice not only the lessons which I daily studied, but even, for several hours, select portions from Herodotus, Thucidides, Xenophon, and the other orators of the second rank, all of whom I read twice through. I also read twice Procles, in the Timæus of Plato. I was impelled to peruse this last work for no other reason than because it was printed in characters difficult to be decyphered, and full of contractions.

This labour, instead of depressing my mind, as I feared, contributed to rouse me from the lethargy into which I had fallen. In the course of this year, 1797, I augmented the number of my satires to seventeen: I also revised and corrected many of my poetical pieces. Becoming more enthusiastically attached to the Greek, as I more fully comprehended it, I translated the Alceste of Euripides, the Philoctetes of Sophocles, and the Persians of Eschylus; and, in short, in order to try my powers, the Frogs of Aristophanes. While engaged in these occupations, I did not neglect the cultivation of the Latin tongue. I studied Lucretius, Plautus, and Terence, whose six comedies, by a strange combination of circumstances, I had translated piece-meal, without having read any of them to an end. Should my version of these comedies be considered above mediocrity, I may jocularly, and with truth, affirm that I executed my translation before reading the original.

I wished also to render myself acquainted with the different kinds of verse employed by Horace. I blushed at my igno-

rance of his writings, and at not having read and committed them to memory. I wished likewise to become acquainted with those which the Greeks employed in their chorusses, and especially with those of Pindar and Anacreon. In short, throughout this year, I endeavoured to accumulate as much information as possible. The only motive for engaging in these studies was to gratify my curiosity, and to abstract my mind from the anxiety and sorrow with which it was overwhelmed on account of the invasion of Italy by the French.

CHAPTER XXVI.

My Progress in the Study of the Greek—I infringe my Vow to Apollo for the last Time—I compose my second Alceste.

I NEITHER expected nor wished to derive any other advantage from my studies than that already mentioned; but Apollo had still one in reserve, which I could not view with indifference. While I studied the literal translations in 1796, after reading Homer, Eschylus, Sophocles, and five tragedies of Euripides, I accidentally fell upon the Alceste of this last author, a piece I had never heard mentioned. I was so much struck, and affected by the sublimity of the subject, that, on finishing the perusal, I immediately scribbled down on a scrap of paper, which I still carefully preserve, the

following note:——"Florence, 18th of January, 1796. Had I not mentally vowed to write no more tragedies, the reading of the Alceste of Euripides would have determined me to change this resolution, and to compose an Alceste. I should have availed myself of all the excellences in the Greek original, while I lopped off the absurdities with which it abounds. Thus I would have had fewer dramatis personæ than are found in the original." I even super-added to this note the names of those whom I would have introduced, and afterwards thought no more of it. None of the other tragedies of this author ever affected me in a similar manner. While re-perusing this poet some time afterwards, for it was my constant custom to read every work at least twice over, I felt, when I came to Alceste, the same transports as before, and in the month of September, 1796, I sketched the scenes of this piece without any intention of finishing it. I had also translated from the Latin, in 1797, while unacquainted with the Greek, the *first Alceste*: in short, this *second Alceste*, which had so

often fallen in my way, heated my imagination to such a degree that in March, 1798, I could no longer set reins to it. I immediately therefore on returning home, after my usual morning excursion, sat down and composed, without a pause, the whole of the first act, inscribing on the margin, "Written under a paroxysm of enthusiasm, and while shedding a flood of tears."

During the following days, I composed, under the influence of the same impassioned feelings, not only the four other acts, but even sketched the choruses, and wrote a preface in prose. The whole was finished by the twenty-sixth of May, when I felt myself relieved from an intolerable burthen. I had however neither any intention of versifying, nor of completing it.

In September, 1798, while persisting in the study of the Greek, I resolved to compare my translation of the Latin of the first Alceste with the original, as much with a view of rectifying it, as of improving myself in the language. Nothing tends so much to this purpose as translations, when we endeavour to comprehend not only the

terms, but also the images and metaphors contained in the original. Having thrown aside the first Alceste, I felt myself inspired for the fourth time with an enthusiastic fervour to complete my own. I again took it up, and while reading it shed a torrent of tears. I began to versify it on the 30th of September, 1798, and completed it with the choruses on the 21st of October, the same year. Thus I infringed my solemn vow, after preserving an uninterrupted silence for ten years. As, however, I neither wished to expose myself to the charge of plagiarism, nor of the sin of ingratitude, and as I conceived this tragedy belonged by right to Euripides, I placed it among my translations, where it remains under the title of Alceste II. by the side of Alcestes I. which led me to conceive and execute the former. I mentioned not the infraction of my vow to any one, not even to my better half, hoping to derive some amusement from this silence. In the month of December, I read this production, as a translation from Euripides, to a party of friends, whom I had purposely invited to

my house. Those who did not thoroughly remember the original fell into the snare; but an individual happening to be present who perfectly recollected it, discovered the joke towards the end of the third act; and the reading, which began in the name of Euripides, concluded in mine. This drama was well received, and even I myself, though I saw in it much to correct and retrench, was on the whole not displeased with it. I have related this fact at full length, because if Alceste should ever be considered as a tragedy of any merit, it may serve to shew the effects produced by enthusiasm on the imagination of a poet. Thus we see verified what often happens, that the most laboured productions of a poet are generally inferior to those which are written from the mere impulse of the moment; hence the inspiration of the muses ought never to be disregarded. If, after all, my Alceste be regarded as a contemptible performance, the reader may justly smile both at it and my details, and regard them as the precursors of the fifth epoch, old age.

As soon as these two productions became known at Florence, my having studied the Greek no longer remained a secret. I carefully concealed it from every one, even from my friend Caluso, who discovered it in the following manner. I had transmitted to my sister, in May, this year, my portrait, excellently painted by Xavier Fabre of Montpellier. On the back of this picture were two short verses from Pindar. My sister was delighted with my present, and having turned it on every side, beheld the little scrawl above mentioned. She immediately sent for my friend Caluso, with whom she was intimate, in order to explain it. By this the abbé saw that I had at least learned to form the characters, and felt fully assured that I would never have been guilty of such a ridiculous piece of pedantry, as to write an epigraph which I did not comprehend. He directly wrote me a letter filled with reproaches for my dissimulation, in concealing from him my study of the Greek tongue; to this I returned a short answer in that language,* arranged as well

* See Appendix.

as I was able, and better perhaps than might be expected from a scholar at fifty years of age. I transmitted with my epistle several specimens of my translations, in order that he might form a judgment of the progress I had made.

His praises on this occasion stimulated me to prosecute my studies with greater ardour. I resumed the same salutary exercise from which I had derived so much benefit in regard to the Latin and Italian, namely that of committing to memory many thousand verses from different authors.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I finish my Anti-gallican, and take Leave of the Muses in a farewel Ode—Weekly Distribution of my Studies—When expecting the Approach of the French, I compose my own Epitaph, and that of my female Friend.

THE dangers with which Tuscany was threatened augmented every day. Already had the French, in November, 1798, taken possession of Lucca, and there was every reason to fear, that on the commencement of the following year they would advance to Florence. On this account, therefore, I was solicitous to settle my affairs, and prepare myself for whatever might happen. Since the preceding year, I had thrown aside the Anti-gallican. With a view to save this production, in the fate of which my mind felt considerable interest, I caused

ten copies of it to be transcribed, and deposited in different places, till circumstances should permit me to draw them forth. Having never dissembled my hatred against these *founders of republics*, I expected from them every species of outrage, and armed myself with fortitude to support it. While unmolested, I determined to remain silent, but if insulted and persecuted I resolved to conduct myself as a friend of rational liberty. I took in consequence such measures, as that, if I could not live free and respected, I might at least not die unrevenged. One of the motives which induced me to become my own biographer was a dread lest some one might undertake the task who either had not sufficient opportunity to ascertain the facts, or who might pervert and distort them. A similar reason impelled me to compose my own epitaph, as well as that of my amiable friend.* These two epitaphs proclaim nothing but the simple truth, devoid of all unmeaning amplification. Having thus, as far as possible, insured my own fame, and secured

* See Appendix.

my memory against reproach, I immediately returned to my usual pursuits. I corrected and copied; I separated what was finished from that which remained imperfect, and abandoned every thing which was neither suitable to my years, nor consonant to the resolutions I had taken. In short, on attaining my fiftieth year, I resolved to take my final leave of the muses. I collected into one volume seventy sonnets, thirty-nine epigrams, &c. which may be regarded as a continuation of those formerly printed at Kehl. I next composed a Pindaric ode, and in order to give it a somewhat Grecian appearance, I entitled it τελευτωδία, after which I hung up my lyre. If I have since composed a few sonnets and epigrams, I have not preserved them, and should now find it impossible to recognise them as my own. Aware that if I did not voluntarily relinquish my studies, the time must at length arrive, when I should be compelled to do so, I embraced the opportunity which my age, and the peculiar situation of my affairs afforded, to terminate my literary career.

With respect to my translations, I pre-

served that of the *Æneid*, which, though transcribed and corrected, during the two preceding years, was still far from being perfect. While I suppressed my translation of Terence, which I had never either revised or corrected, I preserved my version of Sallust, which, I conceived, was tolerably executed. Neither did I commit to the flames my four Greek translations; but as I was fully sensible they were very imperfect, I resolved, if time should be allowed me, to revise them carefully. I began by re-translating Alceste from the original, in order to obviate any errors or mistakes into which I might have fallen, in rendering it from the Latin. I caused Abel to be transcribed, but without any alterations; as also a small piece in prose intitled "*Advice to the Italian powers*," which I had written some years before. This work was not dictated by any wish or pride to appear on the theatre of politics, but merely by the indignation I felt at the narrow and unenlightened policy of the Emperor, and at the still more absurd conduct of the Italian states. Lastly, I finish-

ed my seventeen satires, the number of which I firmly resolved not to augment.

Having thus arranged my literary productions, I environed myself with a triple shield, and calmly awaited every event that might occur. With the view of habituating myself to a kind of life, should my days be prolonged, more conformable to my years and future intentions, I adopted the following system, in which I shall certainly persevere, while health continues. Every Monday and Tuesday I devoted to the perusal of the Bible, the study of which I blushed to have delayed to such an advanced period of life. The Wednesday and Thursday I dedicated to Homer, whose works afford an inexhaustible source of information to any one who wishes to become an author; and the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, to the study of Pindar, the most difficult to comprehend of all the Greek and Lyric Poets, not even excepting either Job or the Prophets. After the first year, it was my intention to appropriate these three last days to the study of the Greek authors, whether in prose or verse. In

pursuing this study, my views were not directed to acquire a fundamental knowledge of this language, which I regarded as unattainable, but merely to render myself equally familiar with it as with the Latin. As I found the method which I pursued to attain this end extremely useful, I shall give it in detail, in order that others may derive advantage from it. After perusing the Septuagint version of the Bible, according to the text of the Vatican, I compared it with the Alexandrine text, and lastly with the Italian translation of Diodati, which I found strictly conformable to the Hebrew. I also read the Latin Vulgate, and afterwards an interlineary Latin and Hebrew Bible. By dint of much study, for several years, I had rendered myself capable of understanding and reading the Hebrew language; the pronunciation of which is, in general, extremely disagreeable, as well as the phrases and modes of expression, which exhibit a strange mixture of the sublime and barbarous.

I read Homer in the original Greek, pronouncing every word in an audible tone of

voice, and rendered literally, into Latin, those verses which I wished to study in the morning. These frequently amounted to sixty, eighty, or even a hundred, and the blunders I committed in this exercise never interrupted my progress. After mangling these verses, I endeavoured to accent them properly: I next read the Greek Scholiast, with the Latin notes by Barnes, Clarke, and others. Then again taking up the literal Latin translation, I compared it with the original Greek, particularly attending to those passages, the import of which I had mistaken in my first perusal, and inscribing on the margin of my text such elucidations as had not been given by the Scholiast. I wrote them in Greek, and to assist me in this, I had recourse to Hesychius, and various other authors. I noted down every uncommon word, expression, and phrase, and explained them likewise in Greek. Lastly, I perused the commentary of Eustathius, on these same verses, which had already cost me such immense labour. This method of study was doubtless extremely tedious and dull;

but my comprehension was also somewhat dull, and therefore more laborious study became necessary, in order to impress on my mind, at *fifty*, what it might have easily quired at *twenty*.

During the preceding year I had performed a more laborious task than the present. I possess a small copy of Pindar, which contains not a single word over which I have not placed numerical figures from 1 to 10, with a view to point out the order in which the words should stand, according to their concordance with each other. Not satisfied with this, I took another Pindar, the old and faulty edition of Calliergi of Rome, which I treated in the same manner, and bestowed on it equal care as I had on Homer. I wrote also marginal notes in Greek, in which I endeavoured to explain the intentions of the author, and to display his conceptions stript of all metaphor. After Pindar I went through Sophocles and Eschylus in a similar manner. These labours, in which I persisted with the most consummate folly, contributed greatly to debilitate my memorial powers, and I am

compelled to acknowledge that the progress I made was not correspondent to my efforts, and that I also committed innumerable mistakes during my first readings. Nevertheless, such studies had become so essential to my happiness, that since 1796, I uniformly continued to appropriate three hours every morning to similar pursuits. My Alceste, my satires, and various poetical pieces, &c. were all written during the subsequent hours, so that I only devoted the remaining part of the day to my own gratification, and when forced to relinquish my works, or my studies, I never hesitated to abandon the former. After having thus arranged my mode of life, I retained only such of my books as I was in immediate want of, packing up all the rest. I sent them to the country, in order to prevent my being deprived of them a second time by an invasion of the French. This took place on the 25th of March, 1799, on which day, previous to their entering Florence, my friend and I left the city, having first taken care to remove all our property, abandoning our house to the occupation of the military.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

My Occupations in the Country.—The French retire from Tuscany—Our Return to Florence. —I experience much Vexation on observing an Impression of the Works I had printed at Kehl, but which were never published, advertised at Paris.

WHILE my friend and I with a few domestics resided in the country, our time was wholly devoted to letters. Besides understanding the English and German languages, she possessed a complete knowledge of the Italian and French, and was intimately acquainted with their national literature. Neither was she ignorant of every thing essential relative to the state of learning among the ancients, having read the best translations extant in these four languages. Hence I could converse with her on every topic, and never felt myself more

happy than when living with her alone, secluded from all other society. Very few of our friends dared to visit us, and that extremely seldom, lest it might awaken the suspicions of our politico-military despotism, which of all monsters is the most truly ridiculous, cruel, and insupportable. It is a tyger conducted by a hare.

As soon as I arrived in the country, I occupied myself with my first and second Alceste. I was so much absorbed in this labour that I forgot the dangers that threatened us. These were not trifling; it was impossible to flatter ourselves that we should escape from them, as they became each day more apparent. Perturbed as my mind was, I yet assumed courage, and prosecuted my usual studies. Arrests, the most arbitrary, were extremely frequent, and always took place during the night. Some youths of the first families of the city had been taken as hostages. These had been dragged in the middle of the night from their homes, and from the arms of their relatives, and transported, like slaves, to the Isles of St Marguerite. Though a

foreigner, I had reason to fear I should be subjected to harsher and still more cruel treatment. As I expected that every night would be the last I should spend at my own house, I took every precaution to avoid being taken unawares, and to prevent myself being maltreated. Already had French liberty been proclaimed at Florence, and anarchy triumphed over worth and virtue. As for me, I employed myself in versification, in studying and writing Greek, and in consoling my female friend. In this unfortunate state did things continue from the 25th of March to the 5th of July, when the French left Florence.

Accustomed to the tranquillity of the country, we resolved to spend another month in our retreat, before removing with our books and furniture to Florence. My return to the city, however, produced no change in the plan of my studies, which I pursued with greater ardour and enthusiasm than before.

After the battle of Nuovi I received a letter from the Marquis of C**, of Alexandria, who had espoused the daughter of my sister. I was not acquainted with him

personally, but merely through report. He was a most meritorious officer, and had greatly distinguished himself in the service of his sovereign, the King of Sardinia, during the continuance of hostilities. He informed me, that, having been dangerously wounded, and taken prisoner, he had entered into the French service after the expulsion of his Sardinian majesty in January, 1799.

I shall here incidentally recount what I had before forgotten to relate. Previous to the invasion of the French, I had been presented to the King of Sardinia at Florence. He had a double claim to my respect, because he had been my sovereign, and was unfortunate. He received me very graciously, and I was much agitated on beholding him: I felt keenly on this occasion, what I had never before experienced—the desire of serving him. I saw him abandoned, and perceived the foolish conduct of those who surrounded him. I would have offered him my services, had I been able to persuade myself that he could have derived any advantage from them; but it was now too late. He retired to Sardinia, but returned on affairs assuming

a more favourable appearance, and remained for several months at Florence, while the Austrians protected Tuscany in the name of the Grand Duke. But uniformly ill-advised, he took no measures that could prove either beneficial to himself or Piedmont. Thus he was quickly overwhelmed. I had the honour of being again presented to him on his return from Sardinia, and as at this time he entertained some hopes that fortune would yet smile upon him, I suffered less regret from reflecting that I could be of no use to him.

No sooner had the victories of the allies begun to tranquillize my mind, than I received intelligence, which, though long expected, grieved me much. An advertisement by Molini, an Italian bookseller at Paris, fell into my hands, in which he announced a complete edition of all my works both in prose and verse. In this advertisement even the very titles were mentioned; and unfortunately I recognized all those printed at Kehl, which I had never published. This operated on me like a thunderbolt, and occupied my thoughts for several days. I certainly had no reason to hope

that those who seized my books at Paris would leave the editions of my four works, *Rime, Etruria, Tirannide, e Principe;* but as several years had passed since this event took place without any means having been adopted to bring them forward, I flattered myself with obtaining a longer respite. In 1799, being convinced that it was impossible to recover the impressions which had been lost, I caused the following advertisement to be inserted in all the Italian Gazettes.

"That my works, having been seized, confiscated, and sold, I formally declared, that I only acknowledged as mine those I had already published, and that I regarded all others as garbled, surreptitious, or pirated."

When I saw the advertisement of Molini, announcing the publication of my works, for the following year, 1800, the only means of exonerating myself, in the eyes of the worthy and respectable part of mankind, would have been to insert a counter advertisement, disclaiming these works, and stating the manner in which they had been obtained; and, in short, to have published, in order to serve as a complete justification

of my manner of thinking, the Anti-gallican, which was certainly sufficient to answer this end. But as I inhabited Italy, I could not take such a step without involving in my ruin those whose safety I prized far above my own. Thus I was prevented from taking the only measure which would at once have freed me from the misrepresentation of those vile slaves, who, being unable to whiten themselves, endeavoured to blacken others by ranking them as their associates. They the more willingly employed my name to answer their views, because I had once spoken in favour of liberty. But my Anti-gallican would have broken the ties by which they wished to connect me with themselves, and would have justified me even in the eyes of the wicked and of fools, who were indeed the only class of men who could confound us together. Unfortunately these two classes constitute more than two thirds of society. Though unable to accomplish every thing I wished, I yet endeavoured to perform what was in my power. I caused to be reinserted, in all the Italian Gazettes, my for-

mer advertisement of 1793, with the following postscript:—"Having learned that an edition of all my works has been published at Paris in my name, I enter the same protest against them as I did six years before."

I found myself involved in a labyrinth of conjectures, respecting the fate of the four works above mentioned, of each of which five hundred copies had been printed. It appeared to me probable, that had they been discovered, they would have been sold off without printing a new edition, as they might be termed superb, both in respect to paper and execution. I uniformly supposed that their non-appearance might be ascribed to the bales, on which I had written *Italian Tragedies*, not having been opened, but thrown aside and forgotten. Be this however as it may, I incurred two misfortunes, the loss of my labour and cost, and the being branded, though not with infamy, at least with the stigma of having leagued myself with villains, which might be conceived well founded from the publication of my works under their auspices.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Second Invasion of Tuscany by the French—The French General indicates a Wish to visit me—Peace somewhat alleviates our Misfortunes—I sketch at once the Plan of six Comedies.

While assiduously occupied in correcting my four Greek translations, and buried in studies, undertaken perhaps at too late a period, the French again took possession of Tuscany, on the fifteenth of October. On this occasion time was not allowed me to retire to the country: besides, I had succeeded in obtaining, as a foreigner, from the municipality of Florence, an exemption from what I conceived the greatest of all misfortunes, having soldiers billetted in my house. As soon as my mind ceased to contemplate such an event, I resigned myself to circumstances. I shut myself up in my

own house, and never went abroad, unless to take an airing for two hours in the morning. This exercise, which my health rendered indispensible, I took in the most solitary places, and always without any attendants. But though I religiously shunned on all occasions the society of the French, they evinced not such a disposition towards me. Unfortunately the French general at Florence was attached to literature. Wishing to become acquainted with me, he called several times at my house. I determined, however, to be visible to no one; and instead of returning his politeness, I took not the least notice whatever of his calls. After an interval of a few days, I received from him a verbal message, requesting to know when he might be permitted to wait on me. Finding that he persisted in his intentions, and unwilling to entrust a servant with a verbal message, which might not be faithfully communicated, I dispatched the following note:—"If the General in his official capacity commands his presence, Victor Alfieri, who never resists constituted authority of any kind, will im-

mediately hasten to obey the order; but if on the contrary he requests an interview only as a private individual, Alfieri begs leave to observe, that being of a very retired turn of mind, he wishes not to form any new acquaintance, and therefore entreats the French general to hold him excused."

To this the general immediately returned the following laconic reply: that having read my works, he had been desirous of becoming acquainted with their author; but as that appeared not to be consonant to my wishes, he would no farther importune me on the subject. In fact, he left me to myself, and I was thus freed from an interview, which must necessarily have proved no less embarrassing than painful to my feelings.

In the mean time, Piedmont having been revolutionized, and wishing to ape their masters in every thing, transformed their Royal Academy of Sciences into a National Institute, modelled on the plan of that of Paris, in which the belles lettres were united to the fine arts. It pleased these gentlemen, whose designations I am unacquainted with, since my friend Caluso had

been dismissed from his office of secretary to the academy, to nominate me one of its members. This circumstance was immediately notified in a letter addressed to me on the occasion. Having been previously informed by the abbé of the honour they meant to confer on me, I returned the letter unopened, and caused them to be informed that I was little solicitous of matriculation, either in their society or any other; and, in short, that I would never enroll myself among any body of men who had excluded such characters as Cardinal Gerdil, Count Balbo, and Chevalier Morozzo, merely because they were sincere royalists.*

Because I have never been a royalist, it by no means follows that I must belong to the class who style themselves democrates. Their republic is not conformable to my fancy; and I declare that I am, and shall ever be, hostile to all their opinions. The irritation I experienced on this occasion once more caused me to infringe my vow, and I composed fourteen verses, which I transmitted to my friend Caluso. I did not keep a copy of them, nor ever shall

* See Appendix.

preserve those which resentment or any other passion may impel me to write.

I did not display equal resolution in the month of September, 1799, in resisting a newly awakened impulse, or, more properly speaking, an old one revived, which I experienced during several days, and to which I at length found myself forced to yield. Having always entertained the idea of trying my powers in the composition of comedy, I sketched the plan of six all at once. These I determined to augment to twelve; but repeated disappointments, chagrin, and particularly my unremitted study of a language so extremely copious as the Greek, had so exhausted my powers of conception, that I believed it would thenceforward be utterly impossible to compose any work requiring much mental exertion: thus I abandoned the idea. I know not how my mind was led to enter on this species of composition, during the most sorrowful period of my life, when we had fallen into a state of the most abject slavery, from which it was impossible to escape; at a period too when both time and opportunity were denied me to execute what it was my

wish to undertake. Suddenly a poetizing spirit animated my mind, and in one of my excursions I almost simultaneously conceived my four first comedies, which, in the ground-work, form only one, since they all tend to the same object by different means. On returning home, I sketched them, and on the following day I essayed my strength in others of a different kind. I conceived the plan of two others, the first of which had no relation to Italian manners, while the second was truly an Italian comedy of the present day. I wished to demonstrate by this piece that I was competent to delineate the manners of the present age. But since these change, it is necessary that he who wishes his comedies to be handed down to posterity, should confine himself to depict the follies of man in the aggregate, and not those of men of any particular country, or existing at any particular period; otherwise, the spirit of comedy, and the fame of an author, must evaporate with the characters and manners he has described. Hence, these six comedies may be divided into three different kinds. The four first are adapted to every age and

country; the second is a production altogether fanciful and poetical; while the sixth may be considered as a *true Italian* comedy of the present day. To write such as the last, nothing more is necessary than to imitate the trash we see every day published. They afford little amusement, and are productive of still less utility. Our age, which is far from fertile in imagination, seems disposed to derive tragedy from comedy, and has converted the drama into what may be termed the *Epopee of the Frogs:* while I, on the contrary, with greater probability, in my opinion, have derived comedy from tragedy. This appears to me better adapted to amuse, to be productive of greater utility, and more compatible with truth. We often witness grandees and nobles who make us smile, but citizens, such as bankers and lawyers, we regard as objects of wonder, because they are rarely seen. Mean and grovelling sentiments ill accord with the dignity of tragedy. However this may be, time will evince whether I ought to preserve these trifles, or whether I ought to throw them into the fire.

CHAPTER XXX.

I write my six Comedies in Prose, and versify them during the following Year—This Labour proves very injurious to my Health—I visit the Abbé Caluso at Florence.

THE year 1800, which had appeared to my mind unusually tedious, at length passed away; and early in 1801, through the multiplied faults of the coalesced powers, a peace was concluded, which still continues.

Before closing my long literary career, I wished to try my remaining powers in the development of my six comedies. I wrote them in the same order in which I had conceived them, in the same space of time, and without interruption: on each I spent six days at most. The consequence of such incessant mental exertion was a severe indisposition, which prevented me finishing the fifth. I was seized with an inflammatory

affection of the head, to which was superadded the gout, which fixed itself in my lungs, and caused me to spit blood. On this I found myself compelled to suspend my labour, and to attempt the removal of my malady. Though extremely violent, it was but of short duration. My convalescence was however tedious, and I remained long in a valetudinary state. It was only towards the end of September that I felt myself enabled to resume my fifth and sixth comedies. They were all, however, developed early in October. As soon as this was accomplished, I found my mind relieved from an insufferable burthen.

Toward the end of this year, I received the afflicting news of the death of my sister's son, my only nephew, Count of Cumiana. He died in the flower of his age, and left neither wife nor children to mourn his loss. Though I had very seldom seen him, except during his adolescence, I yet much regretted his death. While I sincerely participated in the sorrow of his mother, who was now a widow, I candidly avow, that I suffered some uneasiness, when I contemplated the transition of my property to stran-

gers; for my sister, to whom I had resigned every thing, had no other legitimate heirs than three daughters, all of whom were married. The eldest, as I before mentioned, was united to Colli of Alexandria; the second to Ferreri of Genoa; and the youngest to Count Callano of Aost. The contemptible vanity of transmitting my name and family to posterity, a vanity, which, though we may succeed in silencing, it is impossible wholly to eradicate from the minds of those of distinguished rank, was not yet wholly extinct in mine. So true is it, that, in order thoroughly to know ourselves, theories are wholly useless, and that man must be placed in certain circumstances to enable him to form a correct judgment as to his true nature and character. My nephew's death determined me to enter into new arrangements with my sister, with a view to secure the exact payment of my pension. I could not brook the idea, should I survive her, which however appeared to me highly improbable, of regarding myself in the least degree dependent on my nieces and their husbands, with whom I was not at all acquainted.

As on the return of peace, which restored in some degree tranquillity to Italy, the French had abolished the use of paper money, as well at Rome as in Piedmont, we no longer suffered those pecuniary embarrassments to which we had been subjected during the last five years.

In consequence of this happy change in our circumstances, we purchased four horses, one of which was intended for my use. Since my abode in Paris, I had neither kept horses nor carriages of my own, but hired them occasionally. In the mean time, experience, and public misfortunes, as well as so many examples before my eyes of others subjected to a harder fate than mine, taught me moderation. Who would suppose that I, who was formerly scarcely contented with ten or fifteen horses, should now think even four too many?

Not only satiated and disgusted with every thing, but extremely temperate in my mode of life, always dressing in black, and expending little money except in the purchasing of books, I considered myself extremely rich, and took a pride in contemplating that I should be one half poorer at

the time of my death than I was on entering the world. These were the reasons which induced me to disregard the offers made to me by my nephew C*** through the medium of my sister. He wished to exert his interest at Paris, where he had fixed his residence, in order to obtain for me a restitution of my confiscated property.

Like the grasshopper, which chirps only in warm weather, I began the versification of my comedies in the summer of 1802, with an ardour and enthusiasm equal to what I felt when sketching and developing them. During this year I experienced the injurious effects of too intense application to study. I have already mentioned, that I never encroached on the three hours in the morning, which I each day dedicated to reading and study, but I employed the rest of the day, and even those periods which were assigned to exercise, on my literary compositions. After completing the versification of two of my comedies, I was again attacked with an inflammation of the head, and my whole body became covered with biles. These would not have excited much attention, if the largest of them, which

was situated on the outer ancle of the left leg, had not been complicated with an erysipelatous affection, and accompanied with such violent pain as to confine me to my bed during fifteen days. On this account, I was forced to suspend my comedies, and submit patiently to confinement. I felt this the more severely because my worthy friend Caluso, who had for several years promised us a visit in Tuscany, arrived during my illness. He could not protract his stay for any length of time, as he was obliged to return to Turin by a certain day of the same month, to prevent himself being included in the list of emigrants by the Piedmontese republic. The pleasure which I experienced on beholding him was embittered by my illness, which prevented me from moving or enjoying his society. I listened to him, however, while he read my Greek translations, my satires, and my version of Terence and Virgil, and in short all my productions, except my comedies, which I did not even mention to him, conceiving them not yet sufficiently perfect even for the eye of friendship. The worthy abbé appeared satisfied with my la-

bours : he gave me *viva voce,* and in writing, some excellent advice respecting my translations from the Greek, which has proved extremely useful to me, and of which I shall continue to avail myself in future. His departure, after a stay of twenty-seven days, left me a prey to sorrow, which was only alleviated by the company and consoling attention of my fair friend. On becoming convalescent in October, I immediately resumed my comedies, which I finished on the eighth of December. Nothing then remained for me but to correct them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

My Intentions respecting my unedited Works.—I renounce all new Projects, and terminate my Fourth Epoch at the Age of Fifty Years and a Half.—Proud of having overcome so many Obstacles in acquiring a Knowledge of the Greek, I invent the Order of Homer, of which I enrol myself a Member.

It is now time to terminate my garrulity, and to bring this auto-biographical sketch to a conclusion. The maladies under which I suffered, during the two last summers, have admonished me to bring my literary labours to a close. I here, therefore, conclude my fourth epoch, fully convinced that, did I even possess the inclination to enter on any new works, I should find myself deficient in energy to execute them. If it please God to spare my life during my twelfth lustrum, I shall employ it in the correction of my works and translations. Should I survive that period, I shall rest from my labours, and only prosecute my studies; and if at any time I may cast a casual glance on any of my productions,

however I may attempt to improve the style, I shall add nothing. The only labour in which I mean to engage, after passing my sixtieth year, is the translation of Cicero on old age. I shall dedicate this work, which is so conformable to my years, to my female friend, with whom I have participated in all the pleasures and sorrows of life.

As the printing of my unedited works during my life-time would be attended with much fatigue, and subject me to the trouble of revision, I shall only leave behind me a correct manuscript of those which in my opinion merit to be published. All the others I intend to destroy. In like manner, should I be unable to give the last polish to my memoirs, I shall commit them to the flames. Being now about to enter upon my fifth epoch, and second childhood, I shall, in order to amuse the reader, recount my last act of imbecility. Since the period when I terminated my comedies, I have regarded myself as an individual, whose actions could not fail to prove interesting to posterity. Having uniformly persevered, notwithstanding every obstacle, in the study of the Greek

tongue, as soon as I became capable of comprehending, and of reading with facility Pindar, the Grecian dramatists, and especially the divine Homer, and of translating them, either literally into Latin or into tolerable Italian, I piqued myself not a little on the difficulties I had surmounted in the interval between my forty-seventh and fifty-fourth year. As every kind of labour merits some recompense, I conceived it was meet I should obtain one, and that it ought to be appropriate, honourable, and even splendid. With this view I invented a collar, on which were engraven the names of twenty-three poets, as well ancient as modern. To the collar is appended a cameo of Homer, and on the exergue two Greek verses of my own composition, and which I afterwards rendered into Italian. I submitted both the original and the translation to the inspection of the Abbé Caluso; the Greek, in order that he might inform me whether I had committed any solecism, or any error in prosody; the Italian, with a view to learn whether I had not sufficiently softened down what might be reckoned too bold and intrusive in the Greek. An

author, it is well known, may speak of himself with greater latitude in the dead than in the living languages. As my friend approved of these verses, I have transcribed them in order to their preservation.*

As it was my wish to render the collar of the order as superb as possible, I caused it to be formed of gold, and enriched with jewels and precious stones. I declared myself a member of this new order, of which I have at least the merit of being the inventor. Should impartial posterity decree that I am not worthy of being a member of this institution, it will not however withhold that honorary distinction from others who may be deemed better entitled to it. Farewel then, reader, till we meet again; if ever that should happen, I may then probably, like a garrulous old man, be even more given to babble than I have been towards the close of the fourth epoch—*manhood.*

VICTOR ALFIERI.

Florence, May 14th, 1803.

* Αυτὸν ποιήσας Ἀλφήριος ἵππε' Ὁμήρῳ
Κοιρανικῆς τιμὴν ἤλφανε θειοτέραν.

Forse inventava Alfieri un Ordin vero
Nel farsi ei stesso Cavalier di Omero.

LETTER

FROM THE ABBE CALUSO TO THE COUNTESS OF ALBANY,

CONTAINING SOME PARTICULARS RESPECTING THE AUTHOR'S DEATH.

MADAM,

SINCE you have entrusted to my care the Auto-biographical sketch of our highly esteemed friend, I shall take the liberty of communicating to you with as much brevity as possible my thoughts on the subject, and of evincing the high sense I entertain of the honour you have conferred on me. Few were better acquainted than myself with the mind and character of this singular man; and I never for a moment doubted that he would impartially execute the task he had undertaken, without becoming either tiresome or ridiculous: but he has even surpassed my expectations by his amiable candour, and dignified simplicity. His style is easy and unaffected, and the portrait he has drawn of himself exhibits a striking

likeness, and bears evident marks of being traced by the hand of a master. In it we behold this exalted man, such as he really was, equally ardent and singular in respect to his natural dispositions, as by those efforts which he made in order to attain whatever appeared to him dignified and praise-worthy. It is easy to observe that whenever he suffered himself to be led into extremes, his errors originated from the most laudable feelings. I cannot give a better proof of this than the opinion he had formed of me; I owe it only to the most lively friendship; it could be dictated by nothing else.

To the other causes of sorrow, for the sudden and premature death of our esteemed friend, must be joined the regret that, among all the works which he has left more or less imperfect, these memoirs have not received the last corrections, which he would unquestionably have bestowed on them, had he reached that age at which he proposed *either to polish, or commit them to the flames.* To this fate doubtless he would not have condemned them. What right then have we to treat them with such severity; how could we think of depriving

ourselves of a picture exhibiting so correct a view of all his actions and excentricities. I cannot, however, madam, but extol that anxious solicitude with which you watch over these memoirs, and your determination of withholding them from every one, excepting a few select friends, for the purpose of enabling them to favour the public with a more ample account of this illustrious man. This is a task I myself dare not undertake, and I feel the most lively regret on that account, but unfortunately the will and the power to execute are not always in accordance with each other.

To complete the biographical sketch which our worthy friend has left behind him, I think it only necessary to subjoin what I have extracted from the letter with which you honoured me. No one, madam, could be better acquainted with every circumstance relative to the last moments of his life than yourself, who never for a moment quitted him, and devoted so much of your attention towards him.

Count Alfieri, some time previous to his death, had relinquished all his literary pursuits, excepting his comedies, the com-

pletion of which solely engaged his attention; while at the same time his chief amusement consisted in musing on the design and motto for the collar of the order of Homer, in which he was anxious to enrol himself a member. In the month of April, however, he was attacked by a fit of the gout, which always tormented him on every change of season. This paroxysm was unusually severe, probably because it attacked him when worn out with incessant labour, and when he no longer possessed that salutary vigour of constitution which could alone repel it from the vital organs. From having found, during a course of several years, that the state of his digestive functions was not so good as formerly, he had been led to suppose, that in order to calm, or at least moderate, the violence of the gout, it behooved him to diminish the quantum of his food, moderate as it was. What moreover served to confirm him in this opinion was, that he uniformly found his spirits on fasting more vivacious, and better adapted for study.

In vain, madam, did your tender solicitude for his welfare suggest the danger of

such a course, and admonish him to desist from so abstemious a regimen, on observing him become more emaciated every day. Notwithstanding these urgent solicitations, he still remained inflexible in his purpose; and, dreading lest death should occur to prevent the completion of his comedies, devoted his whole time to their correction.

Not contented with this toil, and stimulated by the desire of amassing knowledge, he persevered in pursuing his usual morning studies. The efforts which he made were greater in proportion as his health declined and he became more feeble: disgusted with every thing but study, which constituted his chief amusement in his exhausted state, he pursued his accustomed labours till the third of October, with unremitting assiduity. On that day, having arisen with an appearance of better health and spirits than usual, he went out after his morning studies to take an airing in his phæton. Scarcely, however, had he entered it, than he was seized with a cold shivering. Imagining he would shake it off by walking, he alighted, but was immediately attacked by an acute pain in his bowels, which prevented

him from proceeding. The fever under which he laboured, on returning home, was extremely violent during the day, and abated not till the evening. Though tormented by incessant retching, he passed the night without much suffering, and on the following day left his apartment, and went down to dinner, but had no appetite. He dozed much during the remainder of the day, but was extremely restless throughout the night. On the morning of the fifth, he indicated a wish to take the air, but was prevented by the day proving rainy. In the course of the evening he took his chocolate according to custom, and apparently with much pleasure. On the night of the sixth the pains in his bowels returned, and sinapisms were applied by the orders of his physician to the soles of his feet. As soon, however, as they began to produce some effect, he tore them off, dreading, lest the vesications resulting from their application might render him incapable of walking. During the following day, Alfieri appeared to be somewhat better, and was unwilling to remain in bed. On the morning of the seventh, his physician in ordinary requested that

another member of the faculty might be called in to his aid. This was accordingly complied with, and it was agreed on consultation, that fomentations and vesicatories should be applied to the lower extremities. The patient, however, would not comply with this advice, being continually haunted by the fear of not being able to walk. He swallowed some opium, which mitigated his pains, and gave him a tranquil night. The repose, however, thus obtained, was accompanied by some raving and alienation of mind. The recollection of past events, which had formerly made a lively impression on his mind, recurred to his imagination. He spoke of his studies, and of his labours for thirty years; and what is very remarkable, he repeated in succession a great number of verses from Hesiod, whom he had never read but once. You were by his side, madam, and it was from himself that you learned this last circumstance. It does not however appear that the idea of death, with which he had long familiarized himself, occurred to his mind at this moment, or that he suspected his end was so near at hand. This we are induced to

believe, because he said not a word to you on the subject, though you never quitted him, excepting at six o'clock in the morning, when contrary to the advice of his physicians he obstinately persisted in taking oil and magnesia. This remedy appears to have been productive of much mischief, since two hours had scarcely elapsed from his taking it till his life was in immiuent danger, and on your returning to his apartment, his respiration was become so laborious as to threaten instant suffocation. He arose, however, from his chair, and approaching the bed, leant on it; and a few moments afterwards his vision became obscure, and he expired.' During his illness, he neglected neither the duties nor the consolations of religion, but as no one suspected that his malady would make such rapid strides, he was not much importuned on this topic: so that his confessor arrived not in time to give him absolution. We are fully assured however that the count was not unprepared for this awful event, since his mind was often occupied with the thoughts of death, and he frequently discoursed on the subject. Thus terminated

the life of this illustrious man, on the morning of Saturday, the 8th of October, 1803, when he had completed the fifty-fifth year of his age.

He was interred near the altar of the Holy-Spirit, in the Church of S. Croce, where repose the ashes of so many illustrious men. A simple tombstone has only been raised over his grave, till the mausoleum, which you, madam, intend to erect to his memory be finished, and placed near that of Michael Angelo. Canova is already employed on it; and the work of such an artist must necessarily exhibit a model of perfection.

I could here wish to scatter a few flowers over the grave of my departed friend; I could wish to point out the irreparable loss which we, in common with all Italy, have sustained by his death; but it is necessary to restrain my tears, and this would only make them flow more abundantly. Let us then rather endeavour to find consolation in the reflection, that his memory will not perish, but be immortalized in the works he has left behind him. We must also seek consolation in the idea, that though he did

not live to bestow the last polish on these memoirs, he has throughout drawn a just picture of himself.

No one who reads this life of Alfieri with impartiality can err respecting the judgment they ought to form of his character. If his sarcastic severity, which gave offence to many, had only been manifest in the work in question, you would, I think, madam have consulted his fame in withholding its perusal from every one but a few select friends; but as the sentiments, which have created him so many enemies, are published in several other of his works, as the lustre of his reputation was alone sufficient to excite envy against him, as, moreover, it is probable, that these papers, however preserved, may fall into the hands of ill-designing men, I conceive it necessary to counteract the impression which they might otherwise produce.

Alfieri is entitled to transcendant praise, not only as a writer, but as a man. Simple and irreproachable manners, which few even possess in the middle ranks of life, are seldom looked for in the higher circles of society. Not satisfied, however, with possessing such

virtues himself, he uniformly inculcated them in his writings; and among the sublime affections which animated his soul, he beheld nothing but *country and civil liberty*. A philosopher, who exercises no profession nor employment in a regal government, is infinitely more independent than even the monarch himself. For my part, I have never desired any other liberty than that enjoyed under a monarchial government, nor have I ever disdained to conduct myself like a faithful subject. Many have, however, with too much facility, adopted the opinion that the enjoyment of civil liberty is incompatible with a government in which every thing is regulated by the will of one who styles himself the master of his subjects. Thus did Alfieri deceive himself; —thus it was, that his mind became imbued with those enthusiastic and patriotic sentiments, which he endeavoured to diffuse throughout Italy. But though ardently desirous of beholding the revival of Italian liberty, he yet wished to separate himself from those abandoned men, who, like him, had evinced themselves the warm partizans of liberty, and who by their crimes had even

rendered its name odious. Philosophers will tell us, that we ought not to confound the bad with the virtuous; and that nothing can justify his hatred towards a whole nation. But we must consider Alfieri like an impassioned lover, who finds it impossible to be just to the enemies of his mistress. We must moreover consider him as the Demosthenes of Italy, opposing his Philippics to the Macedonian phalanx. So far from wishing to be considered as his apologist on that account, I am of opinion, that the reputation of this illustrious man requires not my feeble support. I merely request indulgence for a fault, which had its origin in the best feelings of the heart, the *love of his country*. You are at perfect liberty, madam, to make what use of my letter you may think proper; and I entreat you to accept of my profound respect and veneration.

THOMAS VALPERGA-CALUSO.

Florence, July 21*st*, 1804.

APPENDIX.

LETTER TO ALFIERI FROM HIS MOTHER.

Page 197.

I WROTE, my beloved son, on the 8th, instant, to the Abbé Caluso, to offer you a splendid alliance with a lady equally distinguished by her birth and fortune. Her father, who was connected with your own by the ties of friendship, is solicitous to bestow on you his only daughter: he prefers you as a son-in-law to every other, because he wishes to perpetuate the name of Alfieri in this city. I have chosen to make you this proposal through the medium of your friend, in order that while he exerts his influence to induce you to accept it, you may not in the least degree be constrained in your determination. God knows how much I love you, and that a greater pleasure and satisfaction could not be afforded me in this world than to see you settled in your country and native city. I am very far, however, from wishing to constrain your choice, if the lady should not prove in every respect suitable to your inclinations. Consider me, therefore, I entreat you, altogether out of the question. I shall anxiously await your determination, that I may be enabled to give a satisfactory answer to the friends of the lady. I trust

that you will communicate your intentions either to me yourself, or through the Abbé Caluso, to whom I request you to give my compliments.

My husband sends you his best respects; and I remain with the tenderest solicitude for your welfare, &c.

To this letter Alfieri has subjoined the following note.

Naturally little prone to curiosity, I never either conjectured or inquired the name of the lady whom my mother had proposed to me as a wife: nor do I believe that my friend Caluso was better informed than myself in this respect, though I never interrogated him on the subject.

LETTER FROM PENELOPE TO ALFIERI.

Page 232.

SIR,

I TRUST you cannot hesitate for a moment to believe that I must ever entertain a grateful recollection of the tokens of your remembrance, and of the lively interest which you benevolently take in my destiny: these I more particularly feel in as much as I cannot regard you as the author of my misfortune; for, indeed, I am not unhappy, though the sensibility of your mind, and your anxiety on my account, may lead you to conceive so. You have been on the contrary the cause of my emancipation from a world in which I was no ways formed to exist, and which I have never for a single instant found cause to regret. I know not whether on that account I may be wrong, or whether a degree of obstinacy and culpable pride may have blinded my reason; but what I uniformly foresaw has happened, and I return thanks to Providence for having placed

me in a situation more fortunate perhaps than I merited. I enjoy excellent health, to which my tranquil mode of life has not a little contributed. I carefully shun all society, excepting that of a few plain and honest individuals, who neither pretend to genius nor knowledge, the possession of which often tends to render us miserable. But what imparts to my mind the greatest satisfaction, is the friendship of a brother whom I have uniformly loved above every sublunary being, and who possesses the best of hearts, while I find sufficient amusement in reading, drawing, and music. I have been induced to enter into this prolix detail of my situation in conformity to your wishes, and permit me, in return, to assure you that I derive much pleasure from witnessing the happiness you enjoy, and which I am fully persuaded you so much deserve. I have frequently, during the two last years, heard with pleasure your name mentioned both in London and Paris, where your works I understand are much admired and esteemed, though I myself have never seen them. It is reported that you are warmly attached to the Princess with whom you travel, and who, if I may judge from the expression of her countenance, appears well suited to constitute the happiness of a mind so feeling and delicate as your's. It is also rumoured that she reveres you. This I can readily conceive, since, whether unconsciously or involuntarily, you possess an irresistible ascendancy over all those who are attached to you.

I most sincerely wish you a continuation of all the happiness this world can afford, and if chance so order it, that we should ever meet again, it will afford me the most exquisite gratification to hear this confirmed by yourself. Adieu.

Dover, 26th of April. PENELOPE.

LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR TO ABBE CALUSO.

Page 237.

Paris, August 14th, 1792.

My dear Friend,

The conspiracy, which had been hatching for so long a period, at length burst forth. During the night of the ninth or tenth instant, the populace of the faubourg Saint-Antoine, and the faubourg Saint-Marceau, began to assemble, and take up arms; not only all the inhabitants of the city, but even the national guards quickly followed their example, and appeared drawn up in order of battle, with colours flying, and supported by artillery. This vast assemblage arrived between four and five o'clock in the morning at the Palace of the Thuilleries, which was defended only by six or seven hundred Swiss, and an equal number of national guards; on the majority of the latter, however, little reliance could be placed. In the castle were about three hundred gentlemen devoted to the king. Small as this force was, the palace might have been easily defended, had the individuals composing it made proper dispositions, and instead of waiting for the approach of the assailants, immediately advanced to attack them. I ought to add that the cannoneers themselves, who were intermixed with the Swiss and national guards, were suspected of disloyalty, the truth of which ulterior events but too fully confirmed. Under a different monarch, individuals might surely have been found who would have generously sacrificed themselves to the support of his cause, and thus afforded a memorable example to posterity: but under

another monarch, anarchy and popular tumult would have been quickly stifled in the birth. Louis XVI. was certainly not deficient in personal courage, but it much more resembled the calm fortitude of a martyr, than the intrepidity of a prince resolved to perish rather than subject himself to degradation. While momentarily expecting an attack, a message was sent him by the treacherous assembly, and another by the still more treacherous municipality. They each observed, that as it was impossible to guarantee the safety of his royal person in the present agitated state of the public mind, they therefore invited him, and the rest of the royal family, to take shelter in the bosom of the assembly, while the communication remained free by the gardens of the Thuilleries. His majesty, who at first appeared to acquiesce in the determination of his attendants to defend him, on receiving this message suddenly changed his mind, and took refuge with his family and a few courtiers in the assembly. In the mean time, the faithful Swiss, the cowardly and treacherous guards, with his majesty's brave attendants, who had resolved to die in his defence, were shut up as in a cage. As soon as the king departed, under a strong escort of national guards, every passage leading from the palace to the gardens was secured and barricaded. It is not easy to ascertain whether the populace or the Swiss fired first: it seems, however, highly probable that the latter would not be the first to commit this act of aggression, as, besides being very disadvantageously situated, their number was comparatively small with that of their enemies: but on whichsoever side the firing commenced, it is certain that the discharges from the cannon, which the Swiss had pointed

towards the invested gate, made terrible havoc among the assailants, and obliged them to seek their safety in flight. It appears that if the Swiss and the three hundred gentlemen had immediately sallied out in pursuit of them, they must either have finally overcome their enemies, or fallen gloriously in the attempt; but the want of a leader and proper dispositions ruined every thing. The fugitives met, as they were flying in disorder and dismay, a body of *gendarmerie*, which on the present occasion was composed of old French guards, domestics, liverymen out of employment, and other rabble. As all these were avowedly hostile to the royal cause, they encouraged the people, and led them back to the attack. In the mean time the national guards, who were shut up with the Swiss, seeing the attack about to be renewed with an additional force, turned against them. Thus were the unfortunate Swiss, in consequence of being placed between two fires, quickly put to the route, and flying in all directions, were most of them inhumanly butchered. The carnage was dreadful, and continued during that and the following day. As soon as any of them were discovered, whether in the streets, or wherever concealed, they were immediately dragged forth, and immolated by the infuriated rabble. Some of the gentlemen, who remained in the palace, fought and died with the Swiss in the courts below, while others, having opened for themselves a passage into the gardens, either succeeded in saving themselves, or met death in their flight. The palace, however, was not pillaged, though every thing it contained was broken or destroyed. The people slew with their own hands all whom they caught in the act of pilfering, thus wishing by a shew of justice to cover their own

enormities. Throughout the whole affair, robbery appeared to be regarded as one of the seven sins not sanctioned by public opinion, while all the others, merely changed their appellations, and served as a basis for the existing system. The reason of this tumult is self evident. The seditious part of the assembly finding they could not secure a majority to vote for the dethronement of the king, stirred up the multitude to compass at once the downfal of Louis, and the destruction of the monarchy. During the remainder of this eventful day his majesty remained in the assembly, and at night three cells in the adjoining convent of the Feuillans were appropriated for the accommodation of himself and his family. They were suffered to remain without change of apparel: a single domestic was only allowed to every two of the royal family, and their table was supplied from a common tavern. The few gentlemen who had attended their monarch during the first and second day were dismissed from his presence by order of the assembly; in short, such was the treatment they received, that death must have appeared to them a less evil than those they were doomed to suffer. The new constitution is annihilated: all power, at present, virtually resides in the assembly: these are said to be only provisional measures, which I believe really to be the case, though I am of opinion that its sway will terminate in a very different manner from what is generally supposed. A convention is to be convoked on the twentieth of September.

LETTER FROM ALFIERI TO THE ABBE CALUSO,

Originally written in Greek.

Page 266.

To the very erudite THOMAS CALUSO,

VICTOR ALFIERI,

the least of scholars, who, in the space of two years,

having acquired, *suo marte*,

the elements of the Greek language,

transmits, in 1797,

these unseasonable amusements of a youth aged 50 years.

DEAR FRIEND,

Since the sway of these rascally slaves prevails every where; since the sword is suspended over the head of every honest man; and since Pindar admonishes us, that the traitor time hovers around all mortals, dispensing life and death at pleasure, I have resolved to deposit in your hands a catalogue of all my works, which constitute the only patrimony, if I may be allowed the expression, appertaining to me. To your care I consign them—Farewel.

Page 269.

Inscriptiones Latinæ.

QUIESCIT. HIC. TANDEM
VICTORIUS ALFERIUS. ASTENSIS
MUSARUM. ARDENTISSIMUS. CULTOR
VERITATI. TANTUMMODO. OBNOXIUS
DOMINATIBUS. IDCIRCO. VIRIS
PERACQUE. AC. INSERVIENTIBUS. OMNIBUS
INVISUS. MERITO
MULTITUDINI
EO. QUOD. NULLA. UNQUAM. GESSERIT
PUBLICA. NEGOTIA
IGNOTUS
OPTIMIS. PERPAUCIS. ACCEPTUS
NEMINI
NISI. FORTASSE. SIBIMET. IPSI
DESPECTUS
VIXIT. ANNOS. .. MENSES.... DIES....
OBIIT.... DIE.... MENSIS....
ANNO. DOMINI. M.D.CCC....

HIC. SITA. EST
ALOYSA. E. STOLBERGIS
ALBANIÆ. COMITISSA
GENERE. FORMA. MORIBUS
INCOMPARABILI. ANIMI. CANDORE
PRÆCLARISSIMA
A. VICTORIO. ALFERIO
JUXTA. QUEM. SARCOPHAGO. UNO (*)
TUMULATA. EST
ANNORUM.... SPATIUM
ULTRA. RES. OMNES. DILECTA
ET. QUASI, MORTALE. NUMEN
AB. IPSO. CONSTANTER HABITA
ET. OBSERVATA
VIXIT. ANNOS.... MENSES.... DIES....
IN. HANNONIA. MONTIBUS. NATA
OBIIT.... DIE.... MENSIS....
ANNO. DOMINI. M.D.CCC....

(*) Sic inscribendum, me, ut opinor et opto præmoriente: Sed, aliter jubente Deo, aliter inscribendum.

QUI. JUXTA. EAM. SARCOPHAGO. UNO
CONDITUS. ERIT. QUAM. PRIMUM.

LETTER FROM ALFIERI TO THE ABBE CALUSO.

Page 288.

I RECEIVED, by M. Albarey, your two letters, the last of which, dated the twenty-eighth of February, occasioned me much uneasiness. The information which you therein give me, of my being nominated a member of your academy, has overwhelmed me with sorrow. In truth, I had flattered myself that your friendship for me, and your knowledge of my backward and unbending character, would have spared me the vexation and chagrin which I have experienced from this nomination: that might have been easily accomplished, had you entreated those who wished to enrol me in their society to suspend their intention till I had been consulted on the subject; or rather, had you, with that frankness which we usually employ when speaking of others, urged my peculiar habits, and mode of thinking, as an insurmountable obstacle to my acceptance of the honour intended me. Be this, however, as it may, I now request you to extricate me from this dilemma. The mildness and gentleness of your manners render you much fitter than me to terminate this disagreeable affair. On this subject I need only further observe, that in the mean while, should my nomination be formally notified to me, I shall take no notice of it till I am favoured with your reply, informing me that my name has been erased from the list of members, which I flatter myself you will not find it difficult to obtain. I trust that those who procured my nomination will exert themselves with equal activity to obtain the era-

sure of my name. They may allege that they were deceived, and that on more mature reflection they have become convinced that I was not worthy of such an honour. I am not actuated by vanity in this resolution, though I am extremely solicitous my name should be expunged from the list, if it be already inscribed therein. You are aware that I am not ambitious of honorary distinctions of any kind, but assuredly I shall never consent to my own disgrace; not that this could happen by becoming the associate of the many great and worthy men who belong to your society, but, it would certainly redound to my discredit, to accept an introduction among them, under the present existing order of things, and in the manner proposed. In short, never could I reconcile it to my own mind, to belong to any literary society, from which such men as Count Balbo and Cardinal Gerdil have been expelled. It would be heresuperfluous to enumerate the various other reasons, which influence me to take this step, since with these you are fully as well acquainted as myself: I shall, however, be compelled to publish them to the world, if I should not obtain the accomplishment of my wishes. But it will be much more agreeable to my feelings, if you can extricate me from this embarrassment, and supersede the formal notification of my election. Should this, however, arrive, and I be forced to acknowledge its receipt, I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of resorting to means, and of employing language which I could wish if possible to avoid.

REPLY.

Turin, March the 18th, 1807.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THOUGH I did not imagine that your nomination to our academy would afford you any pleasure, it yet never entered into my mind that it would have given you so much uneasiness: at any rate, it would have been highly improper, when your nomination was proposed in an assembly, the half of which is composed of new members, with many of whom I am wholly unacquainted, to arrogate to myself the privilege of interpreting your intentions. Neither could I prevent the suffrages being collected in your favour, in the same manner as was done respecting others put in nomination at the same time. I have now, however, relieved you from any embarrassment in regard to this affair.

Immediately on the receipt of your letter, I waited on the president and secretary, who had been charged to inform you of your nomination, from whom I learned that an intimation had been forwarded to this effect. We then agreed, which arrangement was sanctioned by the president, secretary, and academicians belonging to the class of the fine arts, which held a sitting this evening, that the academy accepted the excuses and thanks addressed to them by me in your name, and that all farther reply would be dispensed with. This affair is therefore terminated according to your wish, and your name will not appear in the printed list of academicians.

Accept my best wishes, &c.

LETTER FROM ALFIERI TO THE ABBE CALUSO.

Florence, March the 28th, 1807.

My dear Friend,

Your last, which informs me that my name is struck out of the list of the members ot your academy, affords me the highest gratification. It was only during the last week that I received the secretary's letter, or, more properly speaking, that it was brought to my house, for I did not open it; and I now return it, earnestly soliciting that you will have the goodness to restore it to those by whom it was written. Nothing now remains to complete my satisfaction in this affair, except the conviction that it has been returned with the seal unbroken to its authors. Had I wished to make any reply, I would have merely contented myself with writing round the unbroken seal these four words:— τι μοι συν δουλοις. But, that I may not make you a party in this affair, and that I may not seem unreasonable, all that I require is, that the letter may be restored in the same state in which I received it, in order to convince the world that I regarded it as not addressed to me. I also frankly avow that I was never much pleased with the paltry title of citizen; not because I wish to be regarded as a count, but because I wish myself to be considered as Victor Alfieri, a freeman, and not a manumitted slave. You will say, it is the usual style adopted on such occasions; to which I reply, that these gentlemen ought not to have concerned themselves with me, or if they did, that they had no right to insult me with the denomination of citizen, which is equally

stupid, infamous, and arrogant; since if there cannot be a *count* without a *county*, neither can there be *citizen* without a *city*. This may suffice; I shall not add another word on the subject; but speak of things known, *lippis et tonsoribus*. In the mean time, if you should not return my letter yourself, do me the favour to keep it till I send some one who will take charge of it. I intreat you, however, when it comes into your hands, to notify to me that you received it unopened, and such as I have sent it to you by my dear nephew. My inestimable friend will herself reply to you respecting her books. It is necessary that I here conclude, in order not to tire you any longer by dwelling on a subject, the recollection of which excites my rage to such a degree, that I know not of what excess I might be guilty, had not the years which have rolled over my head somewhat moderated my passions. The indulgence of these, you may perhaps tell me, would be useless; but the expression of opinions, founded on the immutable principles of truth and justice, can never be unproductive of utility.

Sincerely your's,

VICTOR ALFIERI.

FINIS.

B. CLARKE, Printer, Well-Street, London.

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